



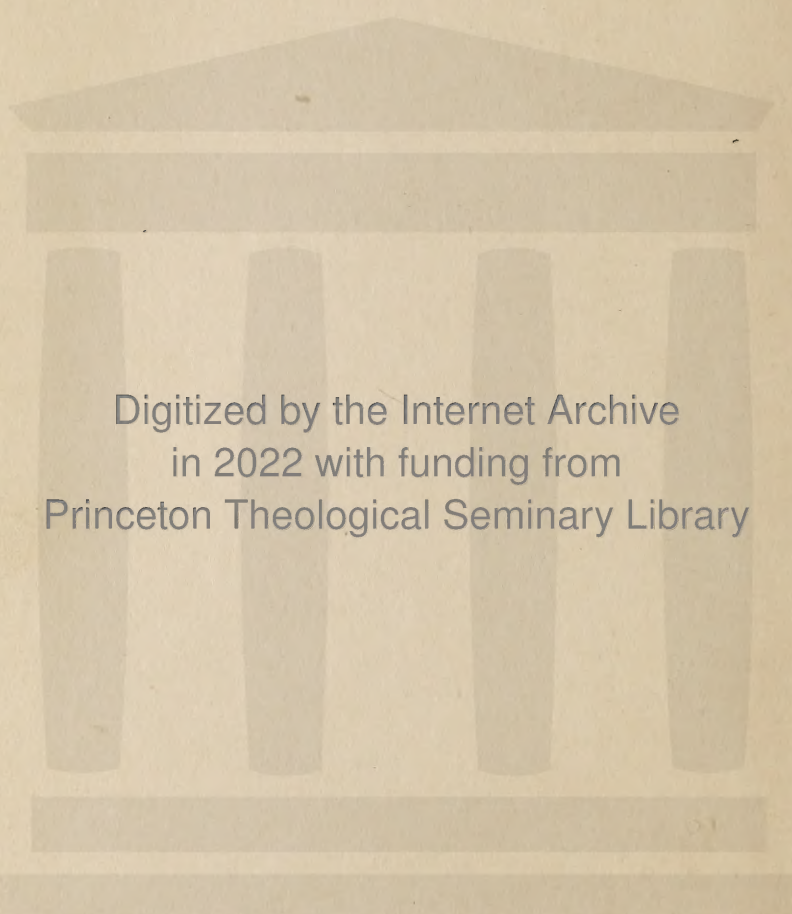




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The fatherhood of God







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THE  
FATHERHOOD OF GOD

BEING THE FIRST COURSE OF THE  
CUNNINGHAM LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH,  
IN MARCH 1864

BY  
✓  
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EDINBURGH

FIFTH EDITION

WITH A SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUME

EDINBURGH  
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK  
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“Hoc tamen constanter tenendum est, nunquam vel angelis vel hominibus Deum fuisse Patrem, nisi Unigeniti Filii respectu; præsertim homines, quos propria iniquitas Deo exosos reddit, gratuita adoptione esse filios, quia ille est natura.”—CALV. *Inst.* lib. ii. cap. 14, sec. 5.

“The saints, being united to Christ, shall have a more glorious union with, and enjoyment of, the Father, than otherwise could be: for hereby their relation becomes much nearer; they are children of God in a higher manner than otherwise they could be; for, being members of God’s own Son, they are partakers of his relation to the Father,—of his sonship. . . . There is doubtless an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son; and the saints, being in him, shall partake with him in it.”—JONATHAN EDWARDS, vol. ii. p. 624, imp. 8vo edit.



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## EXTRACT DECLARATION OF TRUST, ETC.

*March 1, 1862.*

I, WILLIAM BINNY WEBSTER, late Surgeon in the H.E.I.C.S., presently residing in Edinburgh,—Considering that I feel deeply interested in the success of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, and am desirous of advancing the Theological Literature of Scotland, and for this end to establish a Lectureship similar to those of a like kind connected with the Church of England and the Congregational body in England, and that I have made over to the General Trustees of the Free Church of Scotland the sum of £2000 sterling, in trust, for the purpose of founding a Lectureship in memory of the late Reverend William Cunningham, D.D., Principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, and Professor of Divinity and Church History therein, and under the following conditions, namely—*First*, The Lectureship shall bear the name, and be called “The Cunningham Lectureship.” *Second*, The lecturer shall be a Minister or Professor of the Free Church of Scotland, and shall hold the appointment for not less than two years, nor more than three years, and be entitled for the period of his holding the appointment to the income of the endowment as declared by the General Trustees, it being understood that the Council after referred to may occasionally appoint a minister or professor from other denominations, provided this be approved of by not fewer than eight members of the Council, and it being further understood that the Council are to regulate the terms of payment of the lecturer. *Third*, The lecturer shall be at liberty to choose his own subject within the range of Apologetical, Doctrinal, Controversial, Exegetical, Pastoral, or Historical Theology, including what bears on missions, home and foreign, subject to the consent of the Council. *Fourth*, The lecturer shall be bound to deliver publicly at Edinburgh

a course of lectures on the subjects thus chosen at some time immediately preceding the expiry of his appointment, and during the Session of the New College, Edinburgh ; the lectures to be not fewer than six in number, and to be delivered in presence of the professors and students under such arrangements as the Council may appoint ; the lecturer shall be bound also to print and publish, at his own risk, not fewer than 750 copies of the lectures within a year after their delivery, and to deposit three copies of the same in the Library of the New College ; the form of the publication shall be regulated by the Council. *Fifth*, A Council shall be constituted, consisting of (first) Two Members of their own body to be chosen annually in the month of March, by the Senatus of the New College, other than the Principal ; (second) Five Members to be chosen annually by the General Assembly, in addition to the Moderator of the said Free Church of Scotland ; together with (third) the Principal of the said New College for the time being, the Moderator of the said General Assembly for the time being, the procurator or law-adviser of the Church, and myself the said William Binny Webster, or such person as I may nominate to be my successor ; the Principal of the said College to be Convener of the Council, and any Five Members duly convened to be entitled to act notwithstanding the non-election of others. *Sixth*, The duties of the Council shall be the following :—(first), To appoint the lecturer and determine the period of his holding the appointment, the appointment to be made before the close of the Session of College immediately preceding the termination of the previous lecturer's engagement ; (second), To arrange details as to the delivery of the lectures, and to take charge of any additional income and expenditure of an incidental kind that may be connected therewith, it being understood that the obligation upon the lecturer is simply to deliver the course of lectures free of expense to himself. *Seventh*, The Council shall be at liberty, on the expiry of five years, to make any alteration that experience may suggest as desirable in the details of this plan, provided such alterations shall be approved of by not fewer than Eight members of the Council.



## PREFACE TO FIFTH EDITION.

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IN this edition, I have brought back the lectures, with the Appendix of Scriptural Expositions, to the original form ; putting the subsequent controversial matter, hitherto included in the same volume, into a separate and supplementary volume. One or two of the notes appended to the several lectures in the first edition will be found in the supplementary volume of this edition. But the lectures and expositions are completely given in this volume, as well as also the Prefaces to the first and third editions ; to the last of which I ask special attention.

In the supplementary volume, I place first, my reply to Dr. Crawford ; with such additional remarks, in foot-notes, as his rejoinder seems to call for. I add thereafter, in a somewhat miscellaneous fashion, such notes as I think it worth while to preserve in answer to various criticisms.

I restore here the introductory paragraph of my first lecture, left out in the later editions to save space.

“I could have wished that it had fallen to one possessed of learning, leisure, and the habit of study—none of which qualifications now belong to me—

to inaugurate this lectureship. The man whose name it bears would have been the proper person to discharge this duty. It was in consultation with him that the founder matured his plan. And had it pleased God to spare him, we would have had here this day, instead of the name, the living presence and voice of Principal Cunningham.

“The occasion would have been worthy of the man. It is a new thing in Scotland. And it is what not a few of the best and wisest of Scotland’s theologians have for years been anxious to realise. To one person, in particular, the credit is due of having urged upon the church and the community the importance of this object, with an enlightened zeal and perseverance which he will feel to be amply rewarded by the wise and liberal deed of gift of Dr. Webster, becoming palpable as an accomplished fact, in our present meeting. I cannot but congratulate my old friend and beloved brother, the Free Church minister of Newhaven, on his being here to witness this day’s proceedings. The church owes not a little to him in connection with this noble institute.

“I call it a noble institute, because I believe it to be so. And therefore I greatly honour the memory of the man who, when none else seemed to be at all alive to the appreciation of it, or, at least, so much alive as to be moved to practical effort in its behalf, took the matter into his own hands, and by his own act did the thing.



“For the thing is done. It may not be done so thoroughly as not to admit of supplement. I do not think that it is. Something more is needed. But the thing is done. The lectureship is established ; and whether sufficiently or not, it is yet so far endowed as to be henceforth, as it were, an ordinance in Israel. It is a self-perpetuating institute. Humanly speaking, the Cunningham Lectureship, founded by Dr. Webster, is safe for ages.

“What its effect is to be on the church of the future, or on its theology, time with its unknown influences alone can show. It surely must contribute to give fixity to theological investigations ; to harmonise originality with conservatism ; to stimulate fresh thought and inquiry in divines of the new generation ; and yet to link them in close continuity with the graver and slower meditations of those who may be passing away.

“I hope that this result, or a tendency to it, will very soon appear. Naturally, a desire has been felt and acted upon, that the honour and responsibility of some of the first appointments should be assigned to veterans—to those whose spurs, whether on the field or in the study, were won long years ago. But the number of these is now very small. And soon, I would almost say the sooner the better, younger brethren must be called in. This Lectureship must bring forward the representative men of another generation.

“Then the full benefit of this institution will begin to appear. Then it will be seen how, not by its emolument, but by the stimulus to honourable ambition which it supplies, it will tell on the lone chamber of many a student toiling in the recesses and far-off isles of our church ; and tell so as to make his ministry all the more hearty, in the proportion in which it makes his study all the more hopeful.”



## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

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I HAVE delayed the publication of these Lectures, I fear, somewhat beyond the term prescribed by the letter of the Founder's deed, though not so as seriously to violate the spirit of it. I entertained the hope of being able to render them less unworthy of the occasion ; and, in particular, I contemplated a supplementary or preliminary dissertation, in which I might obviate some misapprehensions not unlikely to arise out of my manner of treating the subject, and might also fortify my principal positions by authorities more or less favourable to my views. Various circumstances have so hindered me, that I have judged it best, on the whole, to abandon that intention, and to content myself for the present with a careful revisal of the Lectures as they were delivered. I have given, however, a few explanatory notes. And I have added an Appendix of four Discourses, or Scriptural Expositions, fitted, as I trust, to confirm and illustrate the doctrines which I advocate.

These are not, in my opinion, novel doctrines ; I would be sorry to think that they were. I may have put some points more sharply, and pushed a certain

line of thought more boldly, than some may be quite prepared to approve. I am persuaded that I have really advanced nothing which may not be found, if not categorically asserted, at least fairly implied, in the writings of orthodox and evangelical divines, both of earlier and of later times. But I am also persuaded that in the interest of a sound faith, and in the view of presently prevailing error, it is of some consequence that the aspects of theology which I have endeavoured to present should be more unequivocally and prominently elevated into a conspicuous place of their own, than they have been in some of our systems.\* This must be my apology, both for the choice of my subject and for my way of handling it.

Thus, for one thing, I am anxious to keep the relation of real and proper sonship quite distinct and separate from every other. That the original relation of intelligent creatures to God, the relation constituted in and by their creation, is such as to admit of much friendly and loving intercourse and of many mutual endearments, very nearly akin to fatherly and filial fellowship, I freely allow. But I refuse to call it sonship. Satan, in Milton, claims to be God's son, even in his fallen state—

“The son of God I also am, or was,  
And if I was, I am; relation stands.”—

*Paradise Regained*, iv. 517.

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\* See *infra*, p. xxix.

And he is logically right. "Relation stands ;" and with relation, duty also. The fallen spirit is God's son still, if he was his son before. And he owes his Father filial love. It may be so. In his case it does not matter much. But if it be so in the case of fallen man, how is his case met? I can see how in Christ his case, as that of a disobedient subject, is met. But what provision is made for healing the hurt which the relation of sonship, still standing, has sustained? None that I can see ;—unless sonship is simply merged in subjectship. And that I take to be the real state of the matter, so far as the sounder portion of the asserters of an original relation of sonship are concerned.

The truth is, that this original relation of sonship is with them nothing more than a kind of quality of subjectship. It is subjectship realising itself, if one may so speak, in favourable circumstances and under favourable influences ;—causing it to partake not a little of the genial, cordial spirit which is wont to pervade the walk of a son with his father. If that is all that is involved in the primitive and primeval sonship of paradise, then it follows that it is all that the perfected sonship of heaven can have in it ;—all I mean in kind, there may be a difference of degree. For "relation stands," after its hurt is healed, the same as it was at first, and has ever been.

But such a view does not really satisfy those who look forward to the believer's ultimate glory in Christ.



I cite a few instances in proof. For I claim all such instances as virtually on my side in this argument. They may not make the sonship so explicitly the point at issue as I do. But I think they admit, or rather assert, all that I require for my purpose.

I begin with Goodwin. Writing of the superiority of the future state of the redeemed, as compared with man's position in Paradise, he says :—" I grant that this new spirit, begotten of the Spirit, is of a more divine temper, genius, and aspiement than the image of God in Adam was, which though holy, yet (was so) but in a natural way ;—in knowing God in and by the creatures, and by the covenant of works, and so only according to what is naturally due unto a creature reasonable, as he first falls out of the hands of his Maker. And I should not only grant that this new divine nature, born of the Spirit, is supernatural, in comparison to corrupt nature and the dispositions thereof, but also in comparison of pure nature. Insomuch as Adam was but an earthly natural man, comparatively to that which is born of the Spirit, which is the image of the heavenly, and is ordained in the end to see God in himself, and will be raised up thereto ; and at present hath such a way of knowing and enjoying God, and such object spiritual suited to it as Adam's state was not capable of."—*Works*, vol. vi. p. 161, *Nichol's Edition*.

More particularly, in another passage, he uses language so strong, that I would hold any controversy

with him on the subject to be little better than logomachy:—"Adam was a son of God's by creation (Luke iii. 38). But to be a son of God by Christ, this is a higher thing, and puts the spiritualness upon it which a holy heart values. For it is to be a son-in-law by marriage unto, and union with, the natural son of God. So then the spirituality of our sonship lies in that relation it hath unto Christ."—*Works*, vol. vi. p. 180.

And still more strongly, if possible, in yet another passage he contrasts the servant and the son:—"So in like manner to be begotten again notes a state of sonship, a being truly made a child; for if God begets, he begets genuinely, it proves always a true child of his begetting; and whoever is born of God hath his image, his nature, or as the apostle speaks, 'true holiness' (Eph. iv. 24). They (*i.e.*, apostates) are said to be sanctified (Heb. x.) for that may have a counterfeit, namely, a setting apart to outward service by gifts and enlightenments; but to show it is not true sanctification, or after God in true holiness, they are never said to be born of God. They as servants live in the family, are put into offices and services, and to that end do receive gifts and graces to lay out as talents (Matt. xxv.), which, not improved, they lose, but being not made children, therefore it is they abide not always in the house, as Christ speaks (John viii. 35)—'And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever.'

They are hired servants, not begotten children. They have gifts from him as a lord, but not his image as from a father, and so are never said to be begotten.”—*Works*, vol. vi. p. 154.

Another matter which I have sought to elaborate is the connection of our sonship as believers with that of the incarnate son of God, in its nature as well as in its discovery or manifestation.

As to this last point,—its discovery or manifestation,—I have founded an argument on the distinction, which I hold to be very marked and very significant, between the almost unbroken silence of the Old Testament on the subject of the sonship of the saints, and the clear, full utterances of the New. And I am glad to have had my attention called to a criticism of Delitzsch, which strongly corroborates my view.

It is a criticism on Psalm lxxiii. 15. “‘The generation of thy children’ is the totality of those in whom the filial relation in which God has placed Israel to himself has become an inward reality, the Israel of God or the generation of the righteous (Psalm xiv. 5). It is a generic name, as in Deut. xiv. 1, Hosea ii. 1. For hereby is the New Testament distinguished in this point of the *υιοθεσία* from the Old, that always in the Old Testament only Israel as a people is called son—or as a totality of individuals, sons. But the individual could not yet



venture to call himself a child of God. The personality is not yet set loose from the race, it is not yet independent, it is still the time of the minority."

The other point is, of course, the more vital one. I mean the nature of the connection between the believer's sonship and that of Christ. I have not hesitated to avow my belief in the substantial identity of the relation. I have of course insisted upon certain very material differences. In particular, I have been careful to discriminate between the original ground of a relation, or the manner in which it is constituted or subsists, and its proper nature. It may rest on different grounds and be differently constituted, in two different parties sustaining it, and yet be truly the same relation. Then, again, it must ever be kept in mind that there may be the widest possible difference also, as to the capacities of the two parties respectively for apprehending the relation in all its fulness. When the one party is divine as well as human, and the other human merely, the difference in this respect must be literally immense. Still it may be held to be the same relation, without in the least confounding divinity and humanity, or making man God, or equal to God.

In illustrating the identity for which I plead, I have not felt myself bound to attempt any exact or formal definition of the sonship which I hold to be the privilege of the believer. If it were, in my view, a relation in which, as a believer, he stood alone, or a

relation which he shared only with other believers, such a definition might be legitimately demanded of me. But if it is a relation which he shares with the Son, or rather which the Son shares with him, the thing is not so practicable. Indeed, as it seems to me, the attempt would be almost presumptuous. It is safer and more becoming to study the outgoings or outcomings of the relation in the actings and utterances of the Son himself, and to seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to become more and more one with him in them all.

This, in fact, is what all devout theologians more or less explicitly teach on the subject of the union which faith effects between Christ and his people ;—so that here again I may claim as virtually on my side many who do not employ the phraseology which I adopt ;—phraseology, however, which I think I see reason more and more every day why the Church should appropriate, if her trumpet is to give a certain sound.

I am tempted to give a quotation or two from authors of widely different times and temperaments, bearing on the intimate connection, at least, of Christ's sonship with that of the believer.

I begin with Athanasius. In his epistle on the Decrees of the Council of Nice (ch. 31), he thus writes :—"And Christ would have the sum of our faith to refer to this, for he commanded us to be baptized, not in the name of the unbegotten and the

begotten, nor in the name of the uncreated and the created, but in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ; for thus being perfected, we too are truly made sons ; and naming the name of the Father, we recognise from this name also the Word, who is in the Father. And though each one of us may call our Father his own Father, we must not therefore equal ourselves with the Son by nature. For even this is said of us through him : for since the Word bore our body, and was made in us, it follows that on account of the Word in us, God is called also our Father. For the Spirit of the Word in us addresses through us his own Father as ours : and this is the mind of the apostle when he says, ‘ God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father.’ ”

And again, in his second oration against the Arians, he says :—“ And this is the love of God to men, that of whom he is the Maker he also afterwards became by grace the Father ; and he becomes so when the men whom he has created, as the apostle says, receive into their hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father ; and these are they who, having received the Word, receive power from him to become sons of God ; for otherwise they could not have been sons, being by nature creatures, unless they receive the Spirit of him who is the true and natural Son of the Father. Wherefore, that this might be, the Word was made flesh, that he might make man capable of



receiving the Deity. . . . From this it may be shown that we are not by nature sons, but the Son in us ; and again, that God is not our father by nature, but (the father) of the Word in us, in whom and through whom we cry, Abba, Father. And just so, too, in whomsoever the Father sees his own Son, them also he calls sons, and says of them, I have begotten ; since to beget, is the sign of a son, and to make, of creatures. Wherefore we are not first begotten but made ; for it is written, Let us make man ; but afterwards, receiving the grace of the Spirit, we are said thenceforth also to be begotten. . . . And when men are by grace said to be begotten as sons, yet not the less are they by nature creatures.”

Schleiermacher may not be ranked high as an authority ; but the following passage is interesting. It will be observed that he makes adoption a part of justification ; but he pleads for a high sort of adoption ;—“ As to the second element (of justification), it is not possible that Christ should live in us without his relationship to his Father also forming itself in us, and our thus partaking in his sonship, which is the power that he gives to become the sons of God ; and this includes in it the guarantee of our sanctification. For the right of sonship is to be educated, to be free fellow-workers in the affairs of the house ; and the natural law of sonship is that by means of the vital connection also likeness to the father develops itself in the child. Thus, too, both

elements are inseparable ; for a divine adoption without forgiveness of sins were null, since guilt begets fear, and that again bondage ; and by forgiveness without adoption no constant relation to God would be established. Both in this inseparableness make up the complete reversal of our relation to God, which is only called forgiveness in so far as it is connected with the putting off the old man, and adoption in so far as it is connected with the putting on the new. And both, too, are so mutually conditioned one by the other, that each element may be viewed both as the earlier and the later ; for, on the one side, it would seem that the feeling of the old life must first be blotted out before that of the opposing new life can form itself. But, on the other side, it is only in the new that there lies the right and the power to shake ourselves free from the old. Thus it can be said with equal correctness, after a man's sins are forgiven he is received into the sonship of God, and after he is received into the sonship of God he receives forgiveness of sins."—*Christliche Glaube*, ii. pp. 194, 195.

Nor may it be out of place to quote from Treffry a specimen of what he frequently though incidentally says in his book on the Eternal Sonship :—“ The first Adam upon his fall ‘ begat a son in *his own* likeness ;’ and so ‘ the image of the earthly’ is set upon his entire posterity. He was the type and model of that degenerate and corrupt condition which was introduced by his sin. It is the office of the

second Adam to give back to a lapsed race the forfeited image of God. Nor is he, as the Son of God, the renewer only of the miserable state of man, but equally the type and model of the new creation. Such he is, both with respect to personal purity, and in his eternal filial relation. It is not without reference to this that the faithful are called *sons of God* ; for the entire administration of the gospel is designed to establish, between the human spirit and God, a moral relation in some respect analogous to that which subsists between the divine Father and the divine Son.

“ This was one of the objects contemplated in the incarnation of the Son ; that thus he who was inconceivably remote from us might be brought near to us ; and that beholding the glory, ‘ even of the Only Begotten from the Father,’ the process of assimilation proposed in the divine counsels might be accomplished in us. Hence, ‘ when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth HIS SON, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the ADOPTION of SONS. And because ye are SONS, God hath sent forth the SPIRIT of HIS SON into your hearts, crying, ABBA, FATHER.’ He who by nature is the Son of God becomes the son of man, that we, who by nature are sons of men, may become the sons of God. He assumes our nature that we may be transformed into the likeness of his. The SON is sent forth as our



Redeemer, that we receive at once the *filial relation* and the *filial Spirit*.”\*

There is a passage in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, (Book v. sec. 56), which contains some very strong statements bearing on “the union or mutual participation which is between Christ and his people.” It is too long to be given entire; and I fear I could scarcely make selections from it in a way that would be intelligible. It deserves careful study; and I am mistaken if the careful study of it will not suggest incidental corroborations, at least of the main propositions which I am anxious to maintain.

I leave my work now to the judgment of intelligent and candid students of theology and of the Word of God. I ask no more than this, that the volume be considered as a whole before it is criticised in detail. And I think I am entitled to beg that favour; for whatever may be at first sight startling to some minds in my manner of treating the subject, can be fairly estimated only when my whole reasoning is examined.

EDINBURGH, 17th April 1865.

\* Pages 403, 404, edit. 1837. The italics and capitals are Treffry's own.

## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

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IN carefully revising my Lectures for this new edition, I have made no important alterations, confining myself almost entirely to the correction of some verbal inaccuracies, with an occasional attempt to express my meaning more clearly than before. My main reason for leaving the Lectures unchanged is, of course, my continued conviction of the general soundness of the doctrine which they advocate; though I must confess, at the same time, that I am partly influenced by a desire to avoid even the appearance of evading any of the criticisms to which they have been subjected. Of these criticisms I have no right to complain, for while some have been favourable and flattering in no ordinary degree,\*

\* I feel bound specially to notice the article in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, October 1865. The author of that article is evidently very competent to deal with the theological and ecclesiastical aspects of this question, viewed in the light of church history and church controversies. I do not profess to go so deeply into the subject as he does, and I do not know that I could endorse all that he says. But I congratulate the Church on his advocacy of what I hold to be an important view of the gospel of Christ. And if there is to be any further discussion of the subject, I consider him to be eminently a fit person to take a leading part in it.

almost all, even of the most adverse, have been sufficiently complimentary. I may be allowed, however, to offer one general observation here, with reference to a line of comment in certain quarters for which I was not quite prepared.

I anticipated little sympathy or approval from those who, whatever they may profess, virtually deny or explain away the doctrine of the Atonement. The idea of guilt needing to be expiated; that is, of desert of punishment, so fixed as an unalterable principle in the divine government, and so felt as an ineradicable moral instinct in the human conscience, especially when divinely awakened, that both need to be satisfied by an adequate propitiation;—and the corresponding idea of salvation being more than a mere discovery, objectively by outward revelation and subjectively by inward enlightenment, of a right relation already covertly subsisting between man and God,—its being not that, but at the least the actual rectifying of a relation radically disordered, if not also the introduction of something new into it;—these ideas, which underlie the orthodox and evangelical doctrine of the Atonement, are of the essence of what I teach. I receive therefore without surprise the censure of that theological school which resolves redemption and regeneration into a simple recognition of our standing in the sight and in the house of God as being already all that is to be desired; whether in virtue of there having been no fall at all; or in virtue of the entire



fallen race being *ipso facto* restored by the manifestation of the divine nature in the human, or the elevation of the human into the divine, in the person of the Son of God come in the flesh. That school of theology, in its various forms of development, cannot but be offended by the denial, on the one hand, of an original universal fatherhood such as may cover and control, in a sort of wholesale way, all the Creator's dealings with his intelligent offspring; as well as by the assertion, on the other hand, of a personal and individual justification, in terms of law, as an indispensable preliminary to any real sonship,—any really filial position in the family of the Eternal Father. I confess, however, that I scarcely anticipated such sort of treatment as has come from the opposite quarter. For I am thoroughly persuaded that, as the atonement has its root and sure foundation in the legal and judicial subjection of man to God as ruler, lawgiver, and judge, so it has its best defence in that subjection being kept clear and distinct from every other relation;—and in particular, in its being held to be the one only primitive and natural relation, to the entire and utter exclusion, otherwise than by anticipation, of any relation partaking of the character of fatherhood and sonship.

In the interest, therefore, of the cardinal truth of Christianity,—the propitiatory work or sacrifice of Christ—I ask for the argument of my book a fair if

not a favourable consideration. The more I think of it, the more I am disposed to regret that the subject of adoption, or the sonship of believers, has been so little made account of in our Reformation theology. It seems to me to be the appropriate crown of Calvinism, and its best safeguard at the same time against by far the most formidable line of attack to which in these days it is exposed.

Let any one look into the broad-school productions of our churches, or their reflection in our current popular literature, and he cannot fail to see that the stress of the controversy touching personal religion, as well as systematic divinity, lies in the direction of the sovereignty of the Creator, as absolute ruler in and over his own creation. Against, or in modification of, his right to rule;—in the sense of his having subjected all intelligences under him to a moral law, authoritatively binding on the conscience, and enforced by strictly judicial sanctions;—there is set up the notion of certain claims to consideration on the part of the entire human family, entitling them to a different sort of treatment. Much in that view is made of the sad state in which multitudes are found as regards their opportunities of well-doing; and a question in substance is raised about the equity of their being tried and punished, as being really responsible for what they are. No man with any heart can face such a question coldly or rudely, when

he contrasts his own position with that of thousands of his fellows. It is a dark problem ; and with a deepened sense of his own sins and their aggravations, one is fain to turn away from it and take refuge in Abraham's pious appeal, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Still, it is of the essence of religion to recognise law and judgment as independent of all circumstances, and invested with a supremacy against which nothing can be pleaded. The righteous condemnation of a fallen race, which affords the only approach to a solution of the dark problem, rests on that principle. And whatever place mere sovereignty may hold in the origination and destination of a method of recovery, the same principle of righteousness demanding satisfaction must be held to rule and regulate its character and terms. In other words, the method of recovery, having its source in sovereign grace and love, must have its development or accomplishment through procedure that must be primarily of a legal and judicial nature. It must have respect to men as legally and judicially condemned, and needing, therefore, in the first instance, a legal and judicial justification. That, as I understand it, is the Calvinistic theology ; and I confess that, thus understanding it, I do not well see how it is compatible with any other view of an original sonship, or capacity of sonship, in the creature, than I have ventured to assert.

Then, again, I cannot but think that the actual



realisation of sonship, as I put it, forms a natural and fitting climax to the Calvinistic doctrine of grace. The essence or heart's-core of that doctrine is the personal union of the individual believer to him in whom he believes. This union or identification begins at the lowest point of the humiliation of the Son of God. It is there that the Holy Spirit effects, as it were, the junction. In his cross and in his grave I am made one with Christ. And my oneness with him in his death implies and infers a oneness with him in all that follows upon his death. I ask nothing more than that ; and I am persuaded that nothing less than that does full justice to my Calvinistic creed. My justification is in him, in virtue of my oneness with him in his service. Can it really be so, unless I am so thoroughly one with him as to share with him also in his sonship ?

I close this preface, and, so far as I can see, my whole attempt in the line of vindicating my lectures, with a reference to Dr. John Owen. I am persuaded that a careful study of his entire theology, as bearing on my subject, would well repay the labour that it would require. I can do no more than notice that portion of his great treatise on communion with God,\* which treats of communion with Christ in

\* The full title is significant—"Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each person distinctly, in love, grace, and consolation ; or the Saints' Fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost unfolded."

privileges (part second, chap. x.) Owen makes sonship the third particular implied in communion with the Son ; the two former being described in the preceding chapters (vii. viii. ix.) The first he heads, "Of our Acceptation with God ;" the second, "Of the Grace of Sanctification ;" the third, "Of Adoption." I have thus his high authority for a transposition of the principal benefits indicated in the *Westminster Catechism* as bestowed on believers ;—justification, adoption, and sanctification. At the close of my last lecture I suggest the arrangement sanctioned by Owen,—justification, sanctification, and adoption,—for a reason there given, on which I would gladly have enlarged. But passing from that, I ask attention to the opening of Dr. Owen's discussion of adoption. He calls it "our great and fountain privilege," flowing from "the love of the Father," and "received immediately by,"—*i.e.* through or in—"Christ." "Himself was appointed to be the first-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29), and his taking us to be brethren (Heb. ii. 11) makes us become the children of God." Then he adds, "Now that God is our Father, by being the Father of Christ, and we his children, by being the brethren of Christ, being the head and sum of all the honour, privilege, right, and title we have,"—that fatherhood and sonship being the head and sum of all the good we have,— "let us a little consider the nature of that act whereby we are invested with this state and title—

namely, our adoption" (vol. ii. p. 207, Nichols' edit.) I find nothing to qualify, but much to confirm, this broad statement, in his minute analysis of adoption which is thus emphatically introduced. I claim Owen as on my side.





## LECTURE FIRST.

### THE ORIGINAL RELATION OF MAN TO GOD.

“The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”—ROMANS i. 20. “When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”—ii. 14, 15.

THE subject which I have chosen, with concurrence of the council of this Lectureship, is the Fatherhood of God. It is a subject which might be handled in a great variety of ways, according to the different points of view, and the different aims, of those handling it. My object is chiefly a practical one. It is to bring out the import and bearing of the Scriptural doctrine respecting the Fatherhood of God, as an influential element in Christian experience.

To reach that object, however, it may be necessary to begin with what may seem to be a somewhat abstract and speculative inquiry—an inquiry, I mean, into the relations which God sustains towards his intelligent creatures generally, and the place which the

paternal relation holds among them. This inquiry, accordingly, will occupy the first lecture. The second will be devoted to a consideration of the fatherhood of God, as manifested in the person of the Son; especially with reference to his sonship in his incarnate state, and its bearing on the sonship of his people. In the third, I shall inquire how and how far the fatherhood of God was matter of human knowledge and divine revelation before the incarnation of our Lord. The fourth will contain an examination of the teaching of our Lord and his apostles on the subject; with special reference to the question how Christ's sonship and his people's are mutually related to one another, and connected with one another. In the fifth, I shall advert to the manner in which the relation is constituted, so far as men are concerned. And in the sixth, I shall endeavour to point out some of its characteristic privileges and obligations.

THE inquiry concerning the fatherhood of God, its nature and foundation,—in what sense, to what effect, and on what ground, God is to be regarded as the Father of all or any of his intelligent creatures,—is one that ought to be conducted on the principle of a pure and simple appeal to Scripture; at least it is on that principle that I profess to conduct it. Does revelation ascribe to the Divine Being a relation of paternity as sustained by him towards angels and men? And if so, of what sort is it, how constituted



and how realised? That is my idea of the question at issue.

At the same time it may be proper, as preliminary to the scriptural investigation of the subject, to look at it for a little in the light of natural religion; to see how far, among the elements, whether intuitional or experimental, out of which the system of rational Theism must be constructed, there is any valid or sufficient warrant for conceiving of God as a father.

This is all the more necessary because it has somehow come to be taken for granted in many quarters that the primary and original relation of God to man is the paternal; and that consequently any other relations which may belong to him,—and in fact all his ordinances and actings in all his dealings with the human race as a whole and with its members individually,—must be viewed as springing out of that first and fundamental relation, and moulded and regulated by it. Nor does this mean merely that God must be held to cherish towards persons capable of being the objects of them feelings and affections similar, in many respects, to some of those which find a place in an earthly father's bosom. It is evident that something more is intended; something of the nature of a real and definite relation. For it is made the basis of arguments *a priori* for or against several of those aspects of the Divine procedure with reference to mankind about which controversies are still agitated. It is pleaded that God must be held to act

in this or that particular way towards men, because he is their father ; or otherwise, that he cannot be imagined to adopt such or such a course, inasmuch as it would be inconsistent with his fatherhood.

I do not here speak of this mode of reasoning as unwarrantable and unsafe. I do not raise or argue that point at this stage. I allude to the fact which I have stated, simply as proving that the paternal relation into which some would resolve all the Divine dispensations is in their eyes a great, or rather the only great, reality ; and as rendering it therefore a matter of not a little consequence to attempt to ascertain what root it has, if any, in the original conceptions which nature teaches us to form of her glorious Author.

In making this attempt, I am not called upon, at least in the first instance, to define exactly, or to describe particularly, the relation now in question. It is rather incumbent on those who assert it as a natural and original relation, and who insist upon it as their all in all, to do so. For the most part, however, they decline the task. They are more inclined to deal in somewhat vague generalities ; losing sight, as it seems to me, of an important distinction which, in view of the ambiguity of language, ought to be carefully observed.

We speak familiarly of the relation in which two persons stand to one another, when we mean nothing more than the state of feeling, or the manner of

intercourse, that subsists between them. They are related to one another, in amity or in enmity, as friends or as enemies. The relation between them is one of mutual confidence, or of mutual distrust and disaffection. It is that of a benefactor to him whom he benefits, or of a wrongdoer to him whom he injures. Relation, in that sense, or relative position,\* is not fixed, but variable. And as such, or as being so, it may modify more fixed and permanent relationships, even to the extent of reversing their legitimate mode of action. The actual, *de facto*, consciously-realised relation subsisting at any given time,—say between sovereign and subject, or between brother and sister, or between husband and wife, or between father and son,—may be very different from what the permanent mutual tie binding them to one another, whether by birth or by covenant, must be held, *de jure*, to imply. The difference may be either in defect or in excess ; in shortcoming or in superfluity. The tenderest bond,—the conjugal, the fraternal, the parental, the

\* It may be worth noting here that Dr. Kidd, in his book on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, to which I shall have occasion afterwards to refer, makes constant use of the term “related state,” when speaking of the relationship between any two of the three persons in the Godhead ; in particular between the Father and the Son. It seems at first sight a somewhat awkward phrase. I am persuaded, however, that Dr. Kidd employed it on purpose, and with his usual regard to technical accuracy of theological expression ; having in view the very distinction which I am now endeavouring to explain.

filial,—may thus be practically made void by unloving spouses, brethren, fathers, sons. And on the other hand, a connection not in itself necessarily involving any of the affections and obligations of these unions may have their warm and loving spirit infused into it, by the warm and loving hearts of the connected parties themselves. Thus those who till yesterday have been utter strangers to one another may unite to-day in an embrace closer than either ever gave to his nearest of kin; just as nearest of kin may draw off from one another more than any two mere strangers would ever think of doing.

I do not now enlarge upon this distinction. Its importance, especially when God and man are the parties concerned, may appear more clearly as my argument advances. Meanwhile it is enough for my purpose, in the outset, to have indicated the distinction thus briefly, and, as it were, in the form of a caveat against a possible misapprehension of the introductory observations which I have to offer in this opening lecture; the object of which is chiefly to clear and define the state of the question (*status quaestionis*), when viewed in the light of natural religion and its teachings.

Let it be understood then that it is the relation, or relations, in which God stands to the other intelligences in the universe, that constitutes the subject of



my present inquiry. It is an inquiry which has respect to relationship, and to that only.

I say relation, or relations. For one question—and that a primary and principal one,—must be this:—Are the relations in which God stands to the other intelligences in the universe, manifold, and essentially distinct? Or may they all be ultimately simplified and reduced into one?

That there is, and must be, a certain thread of unity running through them all, and harmonising them all, is probable beforehand or *à priori*. It is probable, as a mere deduction or inference from the unity of God; the essential oneness of the Divine nature. And accordingly, it may be anticipated that in the long run,—as the result or issue of the actual dealings of God with other intelligent beings,—a unity of the strictest sort may come to prevail and be established, in the final adjustment, whatever that may be, of the terms on which he and they are to stand related towards one another for ever. It may not be the same unity for all. There may not be the same adjustment in respect for all. Undoubtedly two opposite poles are indicated, not by Scripture only, but by reason and conscience as well; both of them simple enough; the one simply penal and accursed; the other simply free and blessed: to one or other of which the conflicting elements in the troubled chaos of created will appear to be all tending. But that simplicity, whether as “a savour of life unto life” or

as "a savour of death unto death," is not yet. As things now are, a somewhat more mixed and complex system of relationship would seem to be, if I may so speak, the order of the day.

Certainly, common language suggests the idea of a variety of relations being sustained by the Supreme towards subordinate intelligences ; such as those of Creator, Preserver, Benefactor ; Lawgiver, Ruler, Judge ; Friend, Father. Thus, one would say, the common sense of mankind recognises complexity rather than simplicity ; the manifold rather than the one. The enumeration which I have made of these relations may be too manifold ; too various and complex. Let that be at once admitted. Still, let my enumeration be sifted and simplified ever so carefully, it gives at all events a threefold notion of what I may be allowed to call the normal Divine relationship ; meaning by that term, exhaustively, the entire relative position which God occupies, or may occupy, with reference to his rational creatures, considered simply as such. *First*, there is the relation springing out of the bare fact of creation ; a relation implying certainly preservation and benefaction. The Creator, in virtue of his being their creator, preserves and benefits his intelligent, as well as his other creatures. *Secondly*, there is the relation necessarily constituted by the fact of the creation being a creation of intelligent and responsible beings ; a relation implying moral rule and government ; authoritative law and

retributive judgment. *Thirdly*, there is the relation of which intelligent and responsible beings may fitly, though not necessarily, be the objects ;—the relation of friendship, rising, it may be, into fatherhood.

The popular mind, as it expresses itself in all languages, recognises this threefold conception of God. The distinctions which it involves, between the first view rising into the second and the second culminating in the third, are of such a nature, and the sense of them is so deeply rooted in the very constitution of all created mind, that science the most scientific,—system the most systematising,—cannot be allowed to overlook or disregard them ; or so to aim at their obliteration as absolutely to confound creation with government,—or creation and government with friendship or fatherhood.

But another question here arises. May not these relations involve one another, or run up into one another ? May it not be the case, *first*, that creation implies government ? and, *secondly*, that creation and government necessarily imply friendship and fatherhood ?—necessarily, I mean, in essential principle, *ab origine*, as well as ultimately and practically, in actual result or issue ?

To a large extent, or rather indeed unreservedly, the former of these two questions must be answered in the affirmative. Whatever God creates, he must not only preserve and benefit, but also govern.

Let it be observed, however, that this necessity

does not arise out of any right which creation may be supposed to give to the creature ;—any claim which the creature, as such, may be imagined to have upon the Creator. Nor is it founded upon any such right or claim. It arises solely out of the absolute sovereignty of God, the Creator, and is founded entirely on that inherent and inalienable prerogative of Deity. Whatever God as Creator makes he must rule. If it is not to rule him, he must rule it. And he must rule it, in all its actings and workings ; through all the stages of its development.

And the rule must always be, in a sense, by law and judgment. In a sense, I say, more or less proper. For the nature of the law and judgment by means of which God rules must correspond to the nature and constitution of the thing or being to be ruled.

If it is inert matter that is to be ruled, the law will be of a material or physical kind, whether mechanical or chemical. And the judgment, if it may be so called, by which the law is enforced, will be the material or physical disorganisation which any interference with its uniform and orderly working, or any disregard of that, inevitably tends to cause. Such interference or disregard, it is obvious, cannot come from inert matter itself, but only from a living voluntary agent handling and using it. Upon the living voluntary agent, therefore, the judgment, or quasi-judgment, falls. Inert matter itself never is and never can be disobedient to the law by which it is



ruled ; and consequently never can incur the penalty of disobedience.

But now, let what is to be ruled be, not inert matter, but beings possessed of animal life, having the capacity of feeling and the power of voluntary motion ;—with the sensational propensities which we class as instinctive, and those dawnings of intelligence which, rendering them teachable, look so marvellously like reason, as they are unfolded in growing shrewdness from the lowest to the highest order of the brutal tribes. The sort of law by which such beings are ruled,—the law of instinct, and it may be added, in a measure, of experience,—is adapted to their sentient and motive nature. It tells or operates upon them blindly ; that is, without any consciousness of it on their part, or any faculty of either assenting to it or dissenting from it. Nor are they more conscious of the judgment enforcing the law, as judgment, than they are of the law as law. They receive good through compliance with the law, whether the compliance be their own act or another's act upon them, with equal unconcern. And so also, with equal unconcern, they receive evil through the violation of the law, when either their own act, or another's act towards them, is such as to make it work to their hurt. There is an entire absence, equally in either case, of anything like the feeling of moral obligation fulfilled or outraged ; of moral guilt and culpability avoided or incurred.

That feeling is the exclusive property of intelli-

gence, when it rises to the possession of consciousness and of conscience ; consciousness of the personal self ; conscience toward the personal God. And it is that feeling which identifies and attests the peculiar character of the law and judgment by means of which the Creator rules his really intelligent and accountable creatures. His rule now becomes government, properly so called ; government worthy of himself ; in full harmony with his own personal nature, and with his ultimate purpose in creation, to have persons under his sway, with whom he, as a person, may personally deal. It becomes a rational and moral government, by means of a law and a judgment of which reason and the moral sense take cognisance ; a law, which the soul or spirit, consciously free, voluntarily accepts or disowns ; a judgment, which the soul or spirit, consciously responsible, cannot but confess to be either the appropriate reward of innocence and merit, or the deserved recompense of crime.

Thus it would seem that, from the very nature of the case, creation implies rule and government. The Creator must, of very necessity, be a ruler and governor ; unless his own creation is to be independent of himself. And as regards his intelligent creatures, his rule or government must be, in the proper forensic sense, legal and judicial, if it is to be adapted to the constitution and relative position of the persons who are to be governed. Only thus can he rule them as really persons.

For the same reason also, it is a matter of necessity, as regards himself, that the Creator's rule or government shall be absolute and sovereign. This is a capital point in the argument from creation to government, which must be clearly apprehended and steadily kept in view. If it is as Creator that he rules and governs,—if it is as his own creatures that he rules and governs all things, all animals, all persons in the universe,—by whatever sort of law, by whatever sort of judgment, accommodated to their several natures,—it is not possible to conceive otherwise of his dominion than that it is of the most thoroughly royal, imperial, autocratic kind. For it is the dominion of him to whom all creation belongs. It is the dominion of him who must, if he is to be God, be supreme over all. It is the dominion of him to whom this worship belongs: "Thou, Lord, hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and they were created" (Rev. iv. 11).

Now, if this is at all a right view of the original relation of God to his created intelligences,—the relation necessarily constituted by creation and necessarily implied in creation,—where is the idea of fatherhood? Is there, at this stage, and so far as the inquiry has been hitherto pushed, any room for it at all? Is it not rather excluded? Has that great thought any place among those original, fundamental, primary, and elemental conceptions of the connection

between the Creator and his intelligent creatures, which must lie at the very root and foundation of all religion, and must enter into its heart's core ;—at least if it is to be theistic and monotheistic ? Set pantheism and polytheism apart. Let the proper personality of the one only living and true God be assumed. Let it be taken for granted that the Creator is a living, personal intelligence, distinct from his own creation ; and in particular, distinct from his own intelligent creatures, who are themselves, as he is, living, personal intelligences. It may be clearly shown and certainly inferred that he must, as Creator, govern them ; and govern them in a manner suited to their organisation or constitution, as beings made capable of owning righteous authority and reasonable law, and therefore capable of receiving recompense or retribution. Standing to them in the relation of their creator, he must of necessity stand to them in the relation, as thus explained, of their ruler ; their sovereign lawgiver and just judge. These apprehensions of God, and of his relation to the rational and responsible inhabitants of his universe, are of the essence of all belief in him, and all worship of him. They originate, and what is more, they fully explain and vindicate, both belief and worship. But the paternal relation, the fatherhood of God, has no place among them.

Let the precise question here at issue be carefully cleared and ascertained. It is not a question about



the existence of a certain attribute in God, such as goodness, kindness, pity, sympathy. Nor is it a question about the sentiments and feelings which God may be supposed to entertain towards the beings whom he has made, and which he may express or embody in his actual dealings with them. The question is much more precise and definite. It is about the existence of a certain positively real and actual relation of fatherhood and sonship between the Creator and his intelligent creatures; such a relation as, like all real and actual relations, implies this at least, that in virtue of it certain specific reciprocal obligations of a peculiar nature are incumbent on the parties embraced in it,—having certain specific reciprocal rights, privileges, and endearments associated with them. It is not a divine feeling that may be called fatherly,—as it might be equally well named from some other kindly human analogy,—that we are in search of; but a real and actual divine fatherhood. We want not merely one who, in his other relations, acts as far as possible a fatherly part towards us; but one who is in fact our father.

If any choose to say that fatherhood is simply origination,—that the essence of it lies in being the cause or occasion of a new living person beginning to exist in the universe,—that paternity consists in bringing a new living person, whether instrumentally or otherwise, on the stage of the universe, and in that alone; that it is that, and nothing more;—then of

course creation and paternity are identical. God, simply as creator, is the father of all his creatures. But, not to speak of the obvious difficulty that this establishes somewhat too wide a fatherhood, since it makes it comprehensive, not only of all the higher intelligences, however ultimately sunk and lost; for fatherhood by creation can scarcely be conceived of otherwise than as natural, necessary, and inalienable;—but also of others besides, who may be still less welcome associates;—who does not see that it really evacuates the idea of fatherhood altogether of any precise or definite meaning; making the name little more than a euphonious synonym, or figurative personification, for causation; and in truth denying that there is any real paternal relation on the part of God at all!

Nor will it avail to hold, by way of limitation and definition, that it is his creating them “in his own image, after his own likeness,” that constitutes the Creator to be also the father of the higher intelligences;—as if his fatherhood consisted in his being the originating cause of new beings like himself coming into existence. For this only brings us back to the former inquiry, What is it, as regards the relation between God and them, that their being thus created “in his image and after his likeness” necessarily involves? It can scarcely be proved to involve any more than this; that they are capable of understanding his will, feeling their free responsibility

under it, and receiving reward or punishment in terms of it. His government of them, therefore, must be of a reasonable and moral character ; by means of a reasonable, moral law, having annexed to it suitable and corresponding judicial awards. If the relation of fatherhood arises out of the fact of creation, it may be admitted that, in the case of intelligent creatures, it involves that. But it cannot be shown to involve more than that. And really, if that is all, the fatherhood of God, I repeat, is but a name. It is little, if anything, more than a mere figure of speech. For it cannot, in my judgment, be too strongly asserted, that among the primary and original elements of our relational conception of God, there is absolutely no trace of anything peculiar in the constitution and condition of his rational, as distinct from his other creatures, beyond the bare fact of intelligent responsibility.

Nay, not only so. There is absolutely no room or place for anything more. The intrusive introduction of anything more deranges and disturbs the whole great economy of creation. The notion of the Creator's government of the very highest of his intelligent creatures being anything else, in its principle and ideal, than simply and strictly legal and judicial, is, as it respects the radical and essential relation of Creator and creature, an inconsistency ; an intolerable anomaly ; a suicidal self-contradiction. Were it admitted, it must break down,—so far as it is ad-

mitted, it does tend to break down,—the vast, infinite distance that should ever be felt to subsist between the Creator and the creature. It is fatal to the real recognition of absolute sovereignty on the one hand and absolute dependence and subjection on the other. It introduces, necessarily, the idea of some sort of intermediate relative position, modifying and qualifying the Creator's sovereignty and the creature's subjection ; as if the Creator owed something to the creature beyond strict legal justice ; and as if the creature had some right or claim, irrespective of mere legal justice, which he might assert, if not against, yet at least upon, the Creator. A paternal government, in any fair and full sense of the term, imagined to spring out of the mere fact of creation, or to be implied in it, must be fatal to the prerogative of God as Creator ; and therefore also fatal to the true happiness, because fatal to the right position, of his intelligent creatures. It could only be realised by their being as gods themselves.

Let it be settled, then, as a great fundamental truth, that on whatever other ground the relation of fatherhood in God may rest, and in whatever other sphere of divine operation or creature experience it may unfold itself,—it cannot have its rise in creation, and cannot have its place in that rule or government which is consequent upon creation. Let there be no confounding of things separate and distinct. Government by law and judgment is one thing ; fatherhood



is something altogether different. It is only by keeping them quite apart in our conceptions of them that we can do justice to both. It is only thus that we can conserve the sovereignty inalienable from the one, and give full and free scope for all the affection which is the peculiar glory of the other. And it is only thus that we prepare the way for the harmonious adjustment of the two, in the complete development of the gospel plan,—for their being so married that “what God hath joined, man may not put asunder.”

But, while it is maintained that the only proper and original idea of the relation in which the Creator stands to his intelligent creatures,—the only idea necessarily involved in his having made them, and made them such as they are—is that of rule or government by law and judgment—it by no means follows that there may not have been from the first indications pointing to the higher relation of fatherhood, and a foundation, as it were, laid for its subsequent adjustment and development. On the contrary, the fact revealed in Holy Scripture of the agency of the Eternal Son in the creative work, coupled with what is not obscurely intimated as having been the design of that arrangement,—the glorifying of the Son through the unfolding of his filial oneness with the Father,—would seem to make it not unreasonable to expect that in the original constitution, mental and spiritual, of the higher intelligences there should be found some aptness, at least, for realising the great divine ideal, and

taking on the impress or image of it ; or, in other words, that they should be found so constituted from the first as to be capable of apprehending the paternal aspect of the divine character and administration, when made known to them,—and capable also of entering themselves, in due time and on due warrant, into that state or standing with reference to God, for which the apprehension of his fatherhood may open up the way. These are subjects of inquiry which must come up afterwards. For the present, it is enough to observe that in whatever manner and in whatever measure the notion of God being a Father,—and more particularly, the notion of their being personally interested in his being a Father,—may be supposed to have dawned on the minds of the intelligences, this must have always appeared to them and been felt by them to be something quite distinct from their primary normal relation to him as their moral ruler ; something superadded to that relation, or superinduced upon it, and not to be either identified or confounded with it. His being a Father to them, if they rightly reflected on their true position, must have been regarded as a pure and simple act of grace ; not an essential element of their creature state or condition ; not discoverable by them as creatures through any inference or deduction from the fact of their being creatures ; to be known therefore only by direct communication from God himself, who alone is competent, in the exercise of his mere and

sovereign good pleasure, to determine, and consequently to unfold, the nature and the terms of the relation which it indicates.

These conclusions, as it seems to me, are applicable to the intelligent creatures of God, as such ; and to all of them ; not merely to the guilty and fallen, but to the innocent and unfallen also. There may, indeed be a loose and vague sense in which, for popular or poetic uses, the holy angels may be said to be the sons of God by their creation or from their creation ; and man may be spoken of as having been a child of God in Paradise before he lost by his transgression his original standing there. Even if it could be established, as a theological truth or a historical fact, that God was pleased to regard and treat these innocent subjects of his rule as sons from the very beginning of their existence, still it must be maintained that his doing so was simply an exercise of his own free discretion ; that it was no necessary inference from, no necessary consequence of, his having created them such as he did create them ; that it was a distinct and independent benefit, posterior to creation, in the order of nature, though, on the supposition now made, simultaneous in point of time. I am persuaded, however, that there is really no valid proof or sufficient presumption, either in natural religion or in the word of God, in favour of that idea. I do not think that there is in either any trace of sonship constituted at creation graciously or

*ex gratiâ*, any more than there is of sonship constituted by creation necessarily or *ex necessitate*. This also must be matter of subsequent investigation.

There is one deduction, however, from the views advocated in this lecture to which even at this early stage I must ask particular attention ; for it seems to me to be all-important.

If I am right in holding that any relation of fatherhood into which God may be pleased to enter towards his intelligent creatures must be, in the sense now explained, posterior to the original relation which he sustains, as being their ruler, in virtue of being their maker,—then it clearly follows that the paternal cannot be allowed to supersede, or even to modify the governmental. That prior relation is a necessity of nature, if one may so speak, and not a discretionary arrangement. The mere existence of intelligent creatures involves their subjection to rule by moral law and righteous judgment. Their creator, if his sovereignty in his own creation, and over it, is to be, as it must be, absolute and inviolable, cannot but so govern them. And he must continue so to govern them, whatever other relation he may think fit to assume or to announce. That other relation, of whatever character it may be, and however originated, cannot be conceived of as making any change in the conditions of the primary relation. For if it did, it must be through their ceasing to be creatures and God ceasing to be their Creator. A



monstrous imagination!—to which, however, I must feel myself to be literally shut up, if I am asked to make the fatherhood of God the all in all of my religion.

I contend earnestly for the distinction of the two relations. Neither must be suffered to override the other; neither must be merged or sunk in the other. It is one thing for me to have God as my ruler, law-giver, and judge; it is another and an altogether different thing for me to have him as my Father. What the points of difference are, it would be premature, at this stage, to discuss. But I may briefly refer to two of them, as illustrating the importance of our keeping the relations in question quite apart, in all our conceptions and reasonings regarding them.

Rightly understood, as it seems to me, the paternal relation, in the first place, implies the enjoyment by those towards whom it is sustained of a permanent footing in the family, as opposed to one that is contingent and precarious (John viii. 35). And secondly, in consequence of its implying this, it excludes the idea of punishment properly so called; admitting only that of chastisement (Heb. xii. 5-11). It is not the function of a father, as such, to try, or put upon probation. It is not his function to inflict a penal or retributive doom. But these are functions of that rule or government by law and judgment which God the Creator exercises and must ever exercise. Surely there is here a line of distinction and demarcation

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that is sufficiently clear, and that ought to be kept clear. For observe what follows if it is obliterated or lost sight of. Let the view which some extreme lovers of simplicity would advocate be adapted. Let God be simply a Father and his government simply fatherly. Let all his administrative acts be held to be done by him as the Father of his creatures. Then this dilemma immediately presents itself. Either, on the one hand, you must include among the actings of a father, in his paternal character, the imposing of an arbitrary or discretionary conditional test, and the inflicting of penal judgment; in which case, you make fatherhood little more than a name, descriptive perhaps and suggestive of the general benevolence which may be supposed to temper the severity of strict rule, but not otherwise significant of any special affection or any special mode of treatment. Or else, on the other hand, giving to fatherhood its full and true meaning, and maintaining it to be wholly and exclusively a relation of pure fatherly love, you deny, or to be consistent you should and must deny, that one who sustains that relation and governs according to it can either test in the exercise of sovereignty, or punish in the execution of judgment. Probation, and especially retribution, in the true and proper sense, become thus impossible. In this dilemma lies the mischief of the view which I oppose.

Let a merely human instance, in contrast with a divine ordinance, be referred to, in explanation and

confirmation of my opinion, as to the evil and danger of confounding the two relations.

In the Roman law, the authority of a father over his children was the very same, in nature and extent, with the authority of the civil magistrate. The Roman father had the power of life and death over his son ; and he was irresponsible in the exercise of his power. No other rule, not even the magistrate's, could interfere with his. Nay more, he had a right to demand that his son, even when a public accusation was brought against him, should be handed over by the magistrate to the parent, for the trial of the case and the execution of the sentence. Thus in Roman law the functions of ruler and judge were mixed up with those of father. And with what result? Surely, as every reader of history knows, with sad damage to the one relation which is the source and centre of all the sacred tenderness of home ; and with no corresponding benefit, in respect of strength or stability, to the other, on which the leal-hearted, patriotic, public spirit of the true citizen must rest. The Roman knew no substantial difference between his relation to his father and his relation to the state. Domestic affection was thus weakened, almost to extinction ; while, to say the least, the spirit of loyal subordination to law and its awards was not greatly strengthened.

In marked contrast with the Roman law, the Jewish law on this subject may be quoted. It draws

the distinction for which I plead in a most unmistakeable and emphatic way. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother; and that, when they have chastised him, will not hearken unto them, then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die" (Deut. xxi. 18-21). What can be clearer or more admirable than the distinction here drawn between the paternal and the judicial? The limit of fatherly authority and fatherly discipline is pointedly marked. It reaches to chastisement,—“when they have chastised him,”—but there it stops. The rebel passes from the familiar house and warm heart of a loving and broken-hearted father, who has done his utmost and whose utmost has failed,—to the cold, calm tribunal of “the gate of his place,” the awful seat of judgment; there to be judicially tried by “the elders of his city,” and thence to be delivered over, for judicial execution, to the appointed ministers of the last sentence of the law.

I cannot stay to show the working and effect of this divine ordinance among the Jews, as contrasted with the working and effect of the merely human



legislation of the Romans. With all their faults, I do not know that the Jews have ever been chargeable with want of family affection. Nor may their national loyalty be lightly called in question. All that it concerns me, for my present purpose, to insist upon, is the careful discrimination which the Jewish law makes between the parent and the magistrate ; between the relation in which a son stands to his father, and the relation in which he stands to "the elders of his city." Nor would I press the analogy too far. One qualification at least is needed ; and it is a material one.

Among the Jews, as indeed ordinarily among all the nations of mankind, the two characters or relations, the parental and the judicial, are in separate hands. The father and the magistrate are two different persons. And in the order of nature and of natural development the father comes first. He first makes proof of his paternal relation, before he hands over his son, as a subject, to the magisterial ruler and judge. It is otherwise in the divine economy to which this analogy may be applied. There, the two relations are sustained by one and the same being, the one Supreme God, who is both ruler and father.

Nor is he quite in the position of that Roman father who, being also judge, when his own son appeared at his bar, had either to pronounce the inevitable sentence of condemnation against the criminal, or to satisfy outraged justice by giving himself to

suffer along with him, or to suffer instead of him. In the case of fallen man, the Creator, as governor and judge, sees before his tribunal, not a disobedient son, but simply a rebellious creature and subject. He sees indeed a creature whom he meant to be his son ; whom he made to be his son. And so far, in that view, his regrets and longings are those of a deeply-disappointed father. But the criminal at his bar is not his son ;—as he was not his son before he became a criminal. He has no filial standing ; no filial rights or claims. He is simply a creature and a subject.

No doubt his Creator, having intended originally to adopt and own him as a son,—after probation probably as a subject,—may be pleased to draw near to him, even when upon probation he has failed and fallen, in a way indicative of that original intention ; and may show his willingness to welcome him, on his return, with the fulness of the parental love and the parental blessing which he meant him from the first to possess ;—for which indeed, I repeat, he made him. Even this, however, implies a very special and peculiar manner of dealing, on the part of the Creator, with his fallen creature,—the rebellious and guilty subject of his moral government.

For the difficulty of combining the paternal element with government properly so called,—or introducing it as a modifying or mollifying influence,—is very great. It is found to be so, when the attempt

is made in human affairs, or in the administration of the kingdoms of this world.

A paternal government ! A king or an emperor the father of his people ! A supreme Court of Parliament legislating paternally ! A bench of magistrates or judges awarding paternal sentences ! These are fine ideals. But in its application to facts, how is the theory of the ruler in the state ruling as a father apt, and almost sure, to work ? It will turn out for the most part to err, both by excess and by defect. It errs by excess ; for it is apt to become too paternal in the administration of law and justice. It substitutes discipline for punishment ; the rod for the sword. It errs by defect ; for after all it falls far short of what a fatherly discipline would really require. It does not and cannot wield the rod with the discrimination and discretion which the use of it, as a fatherly instrument, requires ; and which only the intimate familiarity of minute home-inspection and constant home-fellowship can enable a parent to exercise. It is ordinarily better, therefore, on the whole, that the magistrate should be content with the enforcing of his magisterial authority ; under such influences as the general principle of benevolence may suggest. He cannot safely or usefully unite in himself the relations of ruler and of father.

To do so is pre-eminently the glory of God ; his glory in his Son Jesus Christ. It is his having it in his power, if one may so say, to manifest and reveal

a relation of fatherhood altogether distinct from the relation constituted by creation,—though closely connected with it,—that solves the difficulty and explains the mystery. He “bringeth in the first-begotten into the world” (Heb. i. 6). Sitting on the throne of sovereign and universal dominion, he does not, in fond and weak pity, sink the character of the righteous ruler in that of the relenting father. But he introduces his Son; his co-equal, co-substantial, only-begotten, well-beloved Son. And he proclaims his purpose, to make all his intelligent creatures, if they will, his sons in him.

Are they to whom the proclamation comes innocent and upright,—proved to be so by a sufficient test of their loyalty to their Creator as their righteous Lord? For them, it might seem that the mere discovery of this divine relation of fatherhood,—coupled with the assurance that it admitted of their being, so far as their nature is capable of such elevation, comprehended in its wide embrace,—would suffice to make them sons, without their ceasing to be subjects, in and with “the first-begotten.”

Is it, on the other hand, to creatures guilty and depraved that the proclamation comes? Alas! it is, as it might seem, all in vain. For in their case also it is a fixed principle, that if they are to be made sons, it must be without their ceasing to be subjects. But as subjects, they are helplessly and hopelessly condemned. They have violated law, and are doomed to



the penalty annexed to its violation. They are moreover incapable of obedience to law ; their “ carnal mind ” being “ enmity against God,” the lawgiver. How then, continuing subjects, can they ever become sons ?

How otherwise than by the wondrous provision of divine grace, according to which he in whom they are to be sons undertakes to right their position as subjects ? First he deals with their case as it stands in law. They are condemned criminals at the bar of the righteous judge. He joins them there. He sits himself and takes his place beside them ;—not to plead in extenuation of their crime or for mitigation of their punishment, for indulgence, for impunity ;—but as their substitute, to answer for them, to take upon his own head their guilt and doom, that a righteous sentence of legal and judicial acquittal may, by the Father’s grace, be freely theirs. So he clears the way. So, being justified in the relation in which they stand as subjects under law to God their ruler and judge, they may pass into that new and divine relation in which they are to stand for ever ; the relation of which Christ spoke when he sent the message from his empty sepulchre, “ Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God ” (John xx. 17).

## LECTURE SECOND.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, AS MANIFESTED IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST, THE INCARNATE WORD.

“God sent forth his Son made of a woman.”—GAL. iv. 4.

THE only relation or relationship, properly so called, which can be fairly held to be constituted by the fact of creation, so as to be implied in it, or legitimately inferred from it, is that of rule or government by law and judgment. And the only distinction which the possession of intelligence akin to that of the Creator confers on the higher order of creatures, as compared with the lower, is that they are capable of understanding and appreciating the law by which they are ruled, so as either to consent to it or to dissent from it ; and that, consequently, the judgment enforcing the law is to them an experience of conscious personal responsibility. In other words, they are endowed with the faculties of free will and the moral sense. In virtue of their being thus distinguished and thus endowed, they are capable originally, by their very constitution, simply as creatures, of a kind of intercourse on their part with the Creator, and a mode of treatment of them on his part, altogether peculiar.

The peculiarity of it lies in its being personal. The Creator and the creature face one another as persons. Now, proper personality, as I need scarcely say, implies capacity of intelligence and freedom of will. When two parties are brought together as persons, so as to have dealings with one another as persons, they must be able to understand one another ; and they must be at liberty to choose how they are to stand related or affected to one another. You and I, as persons, dealing with one another upon any point at issue between us, must be able to comprehend the point. And we must be free to say whether we are prepared to agree or resolved to differ regarding it. It is not easy to see how anything beyond that can be held to be involved in the original relation, constituted naturally by creation, between God and the highest of the intelligent inhabitants of his universe.

Let it not be supposed that I regard that original relation as imperfect or defective, or that I underrate the rank which it confers. On the contrary, I hold it to be the very climax and consummation of the creature-state, when there comes forth a godlike person, intelligent and free, with whom the personal God may have personal intercourse and personal transactions. No limit can be set to the intimacy of personal communion and the reciprocity of personal affection thus rendered possible.

But the possibility is necessarily conditional upon the assertion on the one hand, and the recognition

on the other hand, of government by moral law and its judicial awards. The very perfection of the creature-state, in the case of intelligent beings, consists in that reciprocal assertion and recognition. Neither angels nor men could have been originally perfect, as creatures, on any other footing. They cannot, on any other footing, be perfect as creatures, ultimately and eternally.

All this, however, is consistent with its being matter of legitimate inquiry whether there is not revealed in Scripture a relation of fatherhood on the part of the Creator and sonship on the part of the creature, quite distinct from any relation constituted by creation? And, in particular, it is consistent with the question being raised, whether it may not be indispensable to the full realisation of the perfection of the creature-relationship itself in the unfallen, and to its full recovery in the fallen, that this new and superadded relation of fatherhood and sonship should somehow come in?

At the present stage of the inquiry, I take up the former of these questions. And I begin with a consideration of the fatherhood of God as manifested in the person of his incarnate Son.

It is not my purpose to enter at any length into the proof of the eternal sonship of the Second Person in the Trinity—involving, as it necessarily does, the eternal fatherhood of the First. I rather assume the fact or doctrine, as plainly taught in Scripture, and, with scarcely an exception of any note, universally



admitted by all believers in our Lord's supreme divinity, in all ages of the Church. But as I consider this eternal relation of fatherhood and sonship in the Godhead to be the real origin, root, and ground, as well as the archetype, prototype, and model of the relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and any of his creatures, it may be proper to bring out briefly, though with great prominence, what is usually held to be the import of this glorious truth.

There are in the undivided essence of the Godhead relations, or "related states;" and these are and must be from everlasting. The one living and true God is revealed, not as God absolute, but as God related; or as God subsisting from the beginning with certain internal relations; in a way, admitting, in some sense, of mutual action and reaction; of a certain reciprocity of loving and being loved.

So we are to conceive of God as love. "God is love." His being love is not dependent on what may be called the accident or contingency of his having creatures to be loved. It springs out of the very necessity of his nature. It is his essential manner of being. Before the existence of any creature—before all time—"God is love;"—not love potentially only, as it were, but love actually; not capable of loving, but loving; he loves and is loved. He is true and very love; not love quiescent, but love active and in exercise. Thus from all eternity God is love. And he is so, and can only be so, in virtue of the

eternal distinction of the divine persons in the Godhead, and the eternal relations which they sustain towards one another.

More particularly, it is in respect of the eternal relation of fatherhood and sonship that God is thus, from everlasting, love. It is chiefly in virtue of that relation that God is revealed as being consciously, if I may so say, and energetically, "love." From everlasting the Son is in the bosom of the Father. And the infinite, ineffable complacency subsisting between the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost is the primary action or exercise of that love which God is; that love which is of the essence of his nature.

It is thus that love in God has never been, properly speaking, the love of himself, or self-love. For there have ever been in the one undivided Godhead the holy three—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, mutually loving and loved. And especially in the second person, and in the real and intimate relation of fatherhood and sonship between the first person and the second, the deep disinterestedness of the divine love is proved. "The Father loveth the Son:" "the Spirit glorifieth the Son." For it is in the Son, as the Son, that the fatherly love of God flows forth in full stream. It flows forth to create and bless the countless multitude of intelligences who are, throughout eternity, to rejoice in calling the Highest their Father, in and with the Son.

Thus, then, the paternal relation, the relation of

fatherhood and sonship, exists primarily and originally in the Godhead itself. And, as thus existing, it is natural, necessary, and eternal. It is not constituted by any creative act, or any sovereign volition or fiat of will. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father; "begotten, not made;" of the same substance; participating in the same nature; "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." In this eternal relation between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is eternally and intimately concerned. Being one with the Father and the Son in the undivided essence of Deity, he is—if one may venture to use such language on such a subject—he is evermore a conscious, consenting party to the relation. It is in the Holy Spirit that this wondrous relation of divine fatherhood and sonship, with all its inconceivable endearments, is realised from all eternity. It is by the Holy Spirit that it is developed, so far as it is to be developed, in time. He is the Spirit of God, and of his Son (Gal. iv. 6).\*

\* I cannot here deny myself the pleasure of quoting a passage from the remarkable book of a remarkable man, the late Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen, of whom a graphic and interesting sketch, drawn up chiefly from personal recollections, by Professor Masson, will be found in *Macmillan's Magazine*, December 1863. In his *Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ*, Dr. Kidd thus sums up his argument from Christ being said to dwell in the bosom of the Father:—"Language cannot convey in stronger words the existence of the only-begotten Son of the Father in the Godhead. If the expression Son be a mere title conveying no relation to the person who is Father,—terms must cease to include meaning, and be siript of the

Thus far I have adverted to the original and necessary relation of fatherhood and sonship, as subsisting from everlasting in the Eternal Godhead. For the further investigation of that great subject, I refer inquirers to such works as that of Dr. Kidd, and the more recent unanswered and unanswerable treatise of Treffrey. My present object does not require me to dwell longer upon it. Assuming the eternity of the relation, I proceed to inquire into the manner in which it is manifested and, if I may so say, acted out.

property of including rational ideas. Could such expressions be used, in any other case, where an unbiassed mind would not instantly affix the notion of a related state between persons thus described?—Could an unprejudiced mind adopt any other conclusion? The love of the person of the Father, and complete participation in his counsels and designs, are attributed to the only-begotten Son. If there were not the Son eternally enjoying this love, and participating in these counsels and designs, there never was the Eternal Father loving, counselling, and designing. This is the utmost verge of knowledge which the human intellect is permitted to apprehend. When it has explored creation and creation's laws—when it has risen to higher contemplations than the investigation of matter can elicit, when it has surveyed farther than planets roll or spheres glitter—when it has exhausted the wonders of the telescope and microscope—when it has studied the soul, whose powers have directed these pursuits—when it has left the observation of kindred minds, and learned what is announced of the ranks of the pure spirits—when it has, in thought, ascended to the illimitable vastness of Godhead,—it is permitted to know that harmony active, energetic, eternal, subsists therein, enjoyed between the adorable persons, the Father and the Son!

“In our nature complacency is the sweet, refreshing influence which hallows enjoyment, which is the unison of the mental powers, which introduces repose from all that is harassing, and a



And here, generally, it may be observed that the development of this relation, its being disclosed and unfolded, is by means of creation, and its history ; of which, indeed, the development of this relation is the one chief and capital design. The created universe is the stage on which it is to be displayed. The succession of events in the created universe is the process through which it is to be displayed.

The interest chiefly centres, at least so far as we of the human race are concerned, in the one great soul-felt intensity of delight. The mind is alive to enjoyment, and misery is hushed. It feels the flow of what is good, and the retrocession of what is evil. Existence is experienced more alertly, more gladly, more exquisitely. The periods when we were without this feeling were, in our estimation, either those of tempestuous confusion, or the dull, dead level where emotions are absorbed in vacancy.—In complacency we feel joy ; we wish joy to be felt by all. The very ardour of our happiness longs for a congeniality of feeling and sentiment. The aspect of creation is more pleasing. For us, the sun shines brighter, and the earth gives its thousand sweets more lovely. We act better ; we think better ; we are better. We long to enjoy this for ever ! We hold communion with those suited for happier, purer scenes. We wish for the time when this complacency shall be warmer—when communion of soul shall be dearer—when we shall increase in the expanse of this feeling. Such is the complacency of men.—But in the Godhead, complacency is undefinable, because it is immense,—vast as the Being in whom it dwells,—vast in the nature of him who ‘fillet all in all,’—vast in that boundless expanse of delight, from whose stores angels’ joys have flowed, man’s delights have been given. There—is the only-begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father. He sees him ; he is with him ; he is God.”—(Pages 221-223. Edit. 1822.)

event of the incarnation. It is the incarnation that illustrates all the preceding, as well as all the subsequent steps in the process of this development of the divine fatherhood and sonship. For it is the incarnation that brings this eternal relation within the range of human cognisance and experience. There may have been other ways of making it more or less clearly known to other orders of being. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that the Father may have found other occasions, and adopted other methods, for introducing his Son to the angels, so that they might recognise him as his Son, and worship him accordingly ;—although I am persuaded, even as regards these high intelligences, that their full insight into the fatherhood of God, and their full participation, to the extent of their capacity, in the sonship which that fatherhood implies as its correlative, will be found ultimately to be connected with the incarnation and its accompanying incidents—"the things which the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter i. 12). Certainly, for all created minds and hearts, the incarnation is the clearest, brightest, most gracious and glorious exhibition that has ever been given, or may I not add, that ever can be given, of the divine fatherhood. It is that manifestation of it, at all events, which must ever be most intensely interesting to the lost family of mankind, for its momentous bearing practically on their everlasting state and prospects.

Let the several principal points which the in-

carnation brings out be in this view carefully considered.

I. In the first place, the incarnation discovers the communicableness of the relation of fatherhood and sonship, as it exists in the Godhead ; it proves it to be a relation which may be communicated to a creature, and shared in by a creature. The incarnation demonstrates, by a plain palpable proof, that this relation is not like an incommunicable property or attribute of Deity, but is something in or about Deity, in which others besides exclusively Divine persons may participate and have fellowship. In point of fact, the incarnation shows this relation actually communicated to humanity, and shared in by humanity, in the person of "the man Christ Jesus." For the man Christ Jesus is the Son of God, in respect of his human nature as well as his divine. He is, as he goes about on earth doing good, the Son of God, in the very same sense, in the very same fulness of blessed significancy, in which he is the Son of God, as dwelling in the Father's bosom from everlasting.

Let it be ever remembered that, though possessed of two natures, "Jesus Christ come in the flesh" is one person ; one individual person ; as true and literally so as I am, or any one of you is. It is the one person, the man Christ Jesus, who is, from and after the incarnation, the Son of God. There are not two sonships belonging to him, but only one ; not two fatherhoods of God towards him, but only one. For

the relation of sonship, being strictly personal, must be one, as the person is one. There are not, there cannot be, two distinct relations of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between God and the Incarnate Word ; the one proper to his divine, the other to his human nature. The sonship of the one person cannot be conceived of as thus divided. It has, and must have, the character or quality of perfect unity. Again, it is to be remarked that the original and eternal relation in which the First Person in the Godhead stands to the Second, as his uncreated, only-begotten Son, cannot be conceived of as altered or modified by that Son's becoming incarnate ; by his taking into personal union with himself the nature of the creature man. His proper personality is not thereby affected ; nor the relation between it and that of the Father. He continues to be the Son of the Father in the very same sense exactly in which he has been the Son of the Father from everlasting. Any other imagination would make that divine relation mutable in time, not, as in his case it must be held to be, necessary and eternal. If it is in any respect, or to any extent, susceptible at any time or in any circumstances of any modification whatever, it cannot be regarded as what we consider it to be, the original and inherent condition of Deity itself, of the everlasting and unchangeable God.

From all this it clearly follows, that in the one undivided person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God



come in the flesh, humanity enters into that very relation of sonship which, before his coming in the flesh, he sustains to the Father. From thenceforth fatherhood is a relation in which the Supreme God stands, not merely to a divine, but now also to a human being ; to one who is as truly man as he is truly God.

This is not, let it be carefully observed, making man as God ; confounding the two natures in Christ, and ascribing to the one what can only be truly predicated of the other. It is not implied in the view which I have been giving that there is any communication of any divine property or attribute, any quality or perfection of the divine nature, to the human nature. The question is not a question about nature at all ; it is simply and exclusively a question of relationship. The two natures, being distinct, and continuing to be distinct, may nevertheless, if united in one person, be embraced in one personal relationship. That is what is meant, and all that is meant. And that surely cannot reasonably be said, either to derogate from the supreme divinity, or to deify the humanity, of the Incarnate Son. As God and man, in two distinct natures, he is one person, standing in the one personal relation of sonship to the Father. That is what he begins to be from the moment of his becoming incarnate.

And he is so, all throughout his earthly course. This also it is important to bear in mind. There is no such thing as dualism, or duality, about this

thoroughly human Son of God, as he is seen walking before our eyes in Galilee and Judea. There is no need of any line being drawn, or any distinction being made, between his sonship as God and his sonship as man ; as if he sometimes spoke and acted in the character or capacity of God's divine Son, and at other times in that of his human son ; as if he sometimes called God Father by a right or title proper to his divinity, and at other times by a right or title belonging to his humanity. To conceive thus of him is really to break the unity of his person. And it does not elevate ; rather on the contrary it lowers him. It lowers him as man, in the human aspects of his position and standing towards the Father and his fellowship with the Father, without at all elevating him as God, in any of his divine prerogatives. The true honouring of him in his incarnate state, is to hold that whatever he says, as the Son, to the Father ; whatever he asks, as the Son, of the Father ; whatever he does, as the Son, for the Father ; he says, and asks, and does, as the "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus ;" the one Lord Jesus Christ.

Here it may be proper, for the purpose of preventing, if possible, misrepresentation and misconception, to interpose an explanatory caution, which, but for there being some men of peculiar minds, apt to pervert even the plainest statements, I might not have considered necessary.

I would not like the inference which I deduce from the fact of the incarnation to be confounded with the notion, which seems much in vogue in certain quarters, of that great event having somehow affected beneficially humanity in general ; the human nature as such ; the human race universally and at large ; so as to impress a kind of filial character on the intuitional apprehension which all men are said to have of God, and on the position which they occupy towards him. I confess, I never can feel quite sure that I thoroughly understand the language used on this subject by the class of writers I refer to ; it seems to me so vague and hazy. I would not do them injustice. And, therefore, I wish it to be observed, that it is not my present object to comment on their opinions, but only to make my own meaning clear. The idea of some at least seems to be, that the Son of God, becoming man, has taken all manhood, wherever and in whomsoever found, into a sort of incorporating union with himself as regards his sonship ; that simply in consequence and in virtue of humanity being a partaker of the filial relation in his human person, it is so in all human persons ; that altogether apart from any dealing with men individually, the Son, having assumed the nature common to all, invests that nature everywhere with the dignity which it has in him, and makes all who possess it *ipso facto* sons. Whether I am right or wrong in believing that to be the teach-

ing of any theologians is not for the present argument of any consequence. All I wish to say is that it is not mine.

I limit my contemplation, for the present, to the one glorious object of the person of our Lord ;—the most glorious object of contemplation, I suppose, in all the universe. I fix my eyes exclusively on him. And I follow him with admiring and adoring gaze, all along the path he trode, from Bethlehem's cradle to Calvary's cross. I see him doing works, I hear him uttering words, which unequivocally proclaim him to be God ; while, evermore, suffering, sympathy, tears, sighs, groans, as unmistakeably prove him to be man. Here are manifestations of power and glory which I hesitate not to ascribe to his divine nature ; there are traces of weakness, weariness, and woe, which I at once ascribe to the human. But while I distinguish the natures, I cannot divide the person. And, consequently, I cannot divide the sonship. It is the one Son of God, sustaining but one relation as Son to the Father, who lives and moves before me, in all his earthly history, whether I behold him putting forth his power, as God, to raise the dead, or submitting, as man, himself to die.

Thus I think the fact of the incarnation may be shown to involve this consequence, that the relation of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between the first and second persons in the Godhead is not in-



communicable ; that it is a relation in which one having a created nature may participate. Undeniably, in point of fact, humanity actually shares in it, in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ come in the flesh.

Let it be observed that I do not now assert the actual communication of this relation to others besides the incarnate Son. Far less do I undertake, at this stage of the argument, to define either the extent and limits, or the terms and conditions, of such communication. It is admitted, or rather asserted, that the relation in the incarnate Son is a personal one ; and consequently, that the mere fact of his incarnation does not of itself prove the possibility of its being communicated to other persons. It is in his case a relation retained by the divine person in the new human nature assumed by him. The new human nature shares in the sonship by entering into the person.

But this shows at least, that human nature, as such, has nothing in it or about it which should preclude, in certain circumstances, the existence and exercise of sonship in that nature. This is all that I at present contend for. What the circumstances are or may be in which this may be possible, is another question. In Christ, we have the divine Son retaining his sonship in his assumed humanity. In the believer, we have a human being divinely united to Christ by the divine Spirit, in the exercise of a di-

vinely-originated faith. And he is thus united to Christ, as the divine Son retaining his sonship in his assumed humanity. I do not say that the circumstances in the two instances are the same. Nor do I, in the meanwhile, even say that they are so far analogous as to warrant a valid conclusion with regard to the identity of the relation. But the incarnation surely renders this, beforehand, a not impossible, nay, a not improbable, opinion ;—which is all that I now assert. And it seems to me to do so without involving the least risk of our being shut up into the wild mysticism which would make Christ and the believer literally one person, or represent the believer as losing his own distinct and proper personality in that of the incarnate Son. On the contrary, my reasoning is all in the opposite line. It is the communicableness of the original and divine filial relation to manhood as subsisting in an individual that I contend for. Christ preserves his proper individual personality when he shares with the believer what is characteristic of him as man—his being a creature. Is there any reason why the believer should necessarily lose his proper individual personality when, by a divine act or operation, he shares with the Son what is characteristic of him as God—his being the Son ? Is it really a question of personality at all, in any fair sense of the term ? Is it not rather a question simply of relation ? Can two relations subsist together in one person ?

But I am anticipating. I return to the subject on hand. I speak of what the incarnation proves, with reference to the person of the incarnate Son of God.

II. In that view, I have noticed one conclusion or inference which I think may be deduced from it. I now proceed to point out another. It is this:—Not only does the fact of the incarnation establish the communicableness of this divine relation of sonship to God the Father; it discovers also its entire consistency, when communicated, with another relation—that of subjectship, if I may be allowed to use the term, or subjection to God as ruler and king. In the person of Christ, the two relations, while continuing distinct from one another, are yet found combined.

I do not see how, before the appearance of the Son of God in his incarnate state, the possibility of such a combination, or the manner in which it might be effected, could be made clearly manifest; how it could be shown, at least fully, to the satisfaction of any created intelligence, that the relation of proper sonship, and the relation of real and actual subjectship, might co-exist in one and the same individual person. For certainly, as it seems to me, all *à priori* presumptions, all antecedent probabilities, must have been felt to be against the union; the two relations being to all appearance, as regards their respective natures and conditions, opposite and contradictory. The problem might well be regarded by any one who had to deal

with it beforehand as all but insoluble—to produce, or even imagine, a being, who should unite and combine, in his own single and individual person, the filial relation, as it has subsisted from all eternity in the uncreated Godhead, and the subject or servant relation, which began to exist when intelligent creatures came upon the stage of the universe.

The problem is now seen actually solved by the union of the two natures, the uncreated Godhead and the created manhood, in Jesus Christ as come in the flesh. In virtue of the one nature, he is the Son ; in virtue of the other nature, he is a subject and a servant. And being one person, combining in himself both natures, he is at once both son and subject ;—both son and servant.

This, as I cannot but think, is the special wonder and the peculiar mystery of the incarnation. Even more, I would almost say, than in the union of the two natures in one person—the wonder, the mystery, to my mind, lies in the union of the two relations. If we at all worthily realise to ourselves the eternal sonship of the second person in the Trinity, I apprehend that we must feel this to be the true state of the case.

Theophanies are easily enough conceivable. The eternal Son of the Father may be imagined to make himself visible in many ways ; assuming on occasion the semblance of angel or man, or any other suitable symbolic form. Personal intercourse also is con-



ceivable. The uncreated Son of the Father may be supposed to visit the created subjects of the Father, and to have dealings with them, of various sorts. But that he should himself, continuing to be the Son of the Father, come to stand, in his own person, in the relation of a subject and servant to the Father—this might well be held to be all but inconceivable beforehand. But it is not inconceivable now. The incarnation has made it palpable as a great accomplished fact. And it is a fact pregnant with great results. His coming in the flesh demonstrates that it is possible for him, who is naturally the Son, to be also a subject and a servant, as all God's reasonable creatures are. May it not, must it not, be regarded as going far to demonstrate the converse also, that it is possible for those who are naturally subjects and servants to be sons, as he is—to enter somehow and to some extent into his relation to God as his Son, as he enters into their relation to God as his subjects and servants?

I have thrown out the idea that there may have been beings far back in the history of the created universe, interested in having the possibility and the manner of this union of the two relations in one person made patent to them. And I have suggested that before the incarnation this may have presented itself to their minds as a difficult, if not insoluble, problem. I refer, of course, to the unfallen angels.

If,—as I venture to think may be shown to be at

least probable, on grounds of reason and Scripture which I may have occasion afterwards to state,—if these blessed spirits, having stood some decisive test of their allegiance as subjects and their obedience as servants, were on that account, and as the appropriate reward of their faithfulness, invested with the character and title of sons ;—and if especially their being invested with that character and title was connected with some introduction to them by the Father of his eternal Son, as such, and some act of homage on their part to him ;—I can well imagine how, having before their eyes an ideal or exemplar of sonship, so august, so intimate, so dear, so transcendently glorious and ineffably complacent, they may have felt themselves at a loss to grasp all the fulness of the blessing so graciously bestowed upon them, in their being called the sons of God. The lowly posture of subjects under dominion, of servants under the yoke, they had been well content to take. But what manner of love is this? Can it indeed be possible that sonship, after the only model of which they have any knowledge, is to be, nay, that it already is, theirs? They cannot doubt, they must believe it to be so. And they must thankfully rejoice in its being so.

But I can suppose that the divine privilege is at first only very imperfectly realised. I can suppose that, even for a long period, it may be all matter of faith with them, rather than matter

of clear-sighted knowledge and experience. I can imagine them looking for clearer light to be shed on what may seem to them so strange, so unaccountable, so all but incomprehensible a state of things, as that their humble standing as creatures should be found compatible with their sharing the high standing of the Son. And as they wait upon the Son in all the stages of his march along the line of his own creation's opening history ;—as they mark his footsteps on this earth, his wondrous goings forth from of old, and the ever-brightening signs of a coming forth more wondrous still ;—I can almost, I would say, see these blessed spirits, waiting, watching, on the tip-toe of expectation, on the very rack of hope, till—Lo ! the babe is born at Bethlehem.

Now at last there bursts on them the great discovery. The Son of God, taking upon him the form of a servant, explains all, harmonises all. Now the joy of their sonship begins to be complete ;—completely intelligible, completely realisable ;—as they fix their gaze on the proper and eternal Son of God become truly and in all respects a servant. Now is their worship of the Son recompensed indeed. They see him who is the Son become a servant as they are servants. They can understand how they, being servants, are sons as he is Son.

Is this altogether a wild and unwarranted speculation ? I do not think so. I think I find some

warrant for it in what all Scripture indicates of the attendance of angels on the Son, and in that very significant intimation of the Apostle Peter already quoted—"Which things the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. i. 12).

At any rate, this speculation, if it be a mere speculation, as to what the angels may have known and reasoned about it, does not touch the conclusion which I am now asserting to be deducible from the mere fact of the incarnation itself. It is that fact which proves, as perhaps nothing else could prove, the possibility of the two relations of sonship and subjectship meeting in one and the same person ;—the sonship, let it be specially noted, being the very relation in which the Son stands to the Father from everlasting ; and the subjectship, let it be also specially noted, being the very relation in which the creature stands to the Creator, as his lawgiver, ruler, and judge.

Much importance, therefore, is to be attached to the keeping of the two relations which meet in the person of Christ apart and distinct. As much importance, at least, is to be attached to that as to the keeping of the two natures apart and distinct. The person is one, though the relations are to be regarded as distinct, even as the natures are distinct. The Son in the bosom of the Father, and the subject or servant learning obedience by suffering, is one and the same person. The Son is the suffering and obe-



dient servant. The suffering and obedient servant is the Son.

III. This thought suggests a third consequence following from the fact of the incarnation, which it is important to notice. The incarnation not only brings the eternal Son into the relation of a subject and a servant, but brings him into that relation after it has sustained a great shock—a fatal jar, as it might seem—after it has become thoroughly disordered and deranged.

I assume here, in the meanwhile, the reality, not so much of substitution as of identification; not so much the eternal Son's substituting himself for us, as his identifying himself with us. The Son of God, in his incarnation, becomes one of us men, one with us men. He becomes one of us, one with us, as fallen creatures, guilty, corrupt, condemned. He shares with us the relation in which we stand to God as subjects, not in its original integrity, as it was at the first, but as it is now, I repeat, disordered and deranged. In its essential nature, of course, the relation is one and the same throughout. It is that of subjection to authority. It is being ruled by law. But as the Son takes it, in our nature, being still the Son, it is subjection to outraged authority—it is being ruled, if one may say so, by violated law.

No doubt his human nature, when he becomes incarnate, may be different from ours in respect of its being such as it was in Adam before he sinned and

fell ;—different, not in its essence, not in anything necessary to identify human nature as human nature, but in the circumstance or accident of depravity and corruption attaching to it, or rather to those who inherit it. I have always felt a difficulty in conceiving of the Holy Son of the Most High becoming man, exactly as man now is since the fall, without qualification or reservation. It has always seemed to me to imply a derogation from his holiness. That he should become what Adam was when he was first made in the image of God, involves no difficulty beyond what lies in the idea of a union of the two natures in one person. But that he should become what I am, when I am begotten in the image of fallen Adam, born in iniquity and conceived in sin,—that theory exceedingly complicates the difficulty. And then, I never have been able to see how, if the human nature of the Son of God had in it anything of the blight or taint which the fall has entailed on it as transmitted to us—if, when he was in our world in human nature, he had any stain of sin, original or actual—he ever could have stood us in stead, as the Lamb of God offered for us without blemish and without spot ; or, in other words, as the Holy One of God taking our place and answering for us, by substitution, under a sentence of condemnation from which, as it would seem, if he is really to do so, he must himself be free. I cannot, therefore, reconcile myself to the idea of his assuming the human nature

in its corrupt condition, and under the personal liabilities consequent upon the fall. I hold his manhood to be what unfallen Adam's manhood was.

But the question of relation is altogether different. For the very same reason for which I maintain that he assumes our nature in the incarnation, not as it is now, but as it was before the fall, I maintain also that he enters into our relation to God, as his subjects and servants, in its present, not in its original state.

The incarnation, if real, necessarily implies this ; or at all events, the end or design of the incarnation requires it. He comes into our place or position as that of subjects and servants who have disobeyed, and have justly incurred the penalty of disobedience, —to relieve us of our liabilities by taking them on himself. The incarnation of the Son of God is his entering into our relation to God, as a relation involving guilt to be answered for, and the wrath and curse of God to be endured.

How does this enhance the wonder and deepen the mystery of the incarnation ! For what does it imply ? In the person of the man Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of the living God, the relation of sonship to God, which from everlasting is his glory and joy in heaven, must now for a time co-exist with the relation of criminality and condemnation, under God's righteous sentence, which is to be the misery of lost intelligences in hell to everlasting ! That these two

opposite relations should meet in the incarnate Son of God, in him and in his experience, even for a moment, is an amazing thought. How much more so is it when we consider that, however the full agony of the felt contrast between them may have been concentrated into one dark hour, he must have been conscious, for a lifetime, of their really meeting in him! Surely this is indeed a great wonder and mystery. And yet, as it would seem, nothing short of this is implied in the incarnation of the Son of God. Nor, if anything less had been implied in it, would our case be really met;—not at least if we, who are by nature not merely servants and subjects, but as servants and subjects, criminal and condemned, are to find our relation to God in that character and position—yes! even this relation of ours to God,—not ultimately incompatible after all, through his marvellous grace, with our being admitted into participation in the relation which he sustains to God, who washes us in his blood and renovates us by his Spirit;—that relation of sonship which gives to his mediation on our behalf all its value and all its efficacy, and which alone opens up the way to our being sons, as he is the Son.

IV. There is yet a fourth inference or deduction which I would draw from the fact of the incarnation as uniting in the one person of Christ, not only the two natures, the divine and the human, but the



two relations, that of Son and that of subject and servant. It is this. Not only does the incarnation bring the Son into the relation of a subject, under the inevitable condition of criminality and condemnation now attaching to that relation in our case ; it proves that the relation itself, apart from that condition, may be one in spirit with that of sonship ; and it secures that, as regards all who are in Christ, it shall ultimately be so, and that for ever.

I assume the union of the two natures in the one person of Christ to be indissoluble. And I argue that, the two natures being indissolubly and for ever united in him, the two corresponding relations are also united in him indissolubly and for ever. How they are so, and how they are to be seen to be so in the world to come, it may be difficult to imagine. But that they are so, would seem to follow as a necessary consequence from his unchangeableness, as Redeemer, Lord, and King,—his being “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

Of course the relation of subjectship must be divested conclusively and thoroughly of the character or condition of criminality and condemnation attaching to it when he comes into it. How that is effected I need not now state at length. I simply refer to his “obedience and death,” as satisfying the claims of outraged authority and violated law. That being over, there is no more criminality, no more condemnation, to mar this relation assumed by him, as it

thenceforth co-exists in him with his own natural and divine relation of sonship.

Thus the relation of subjectship adapts itself in a wonderful manner, and through a wonderful process, to the relation of sonship ; and that too, even after it has been so deranged and broken by the introduction of sin, that even its restoration to its original integrity could scarcely have been anticipated, far less its elevation to so high an honour in the person of its Great Restorer ;—who, in virtue of his incarnation, “is, and continues to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever ;”—and therefore also, on the same ground, is and continues to be Son and subject, in two distinct relations, and one person for ever.

To some, this view of our Lord’s manner of existence throughout eternity may seem, at first sight, strange and startling ; and beyond all question it is a great inscrutable mystery. The idea of the Eternal Son, the Maker, Lord, and Heir of all things, not only condescending to occupy for a time the position of a subject, but consenting to make that position his own inalienably and for ever, is very solemn and awful. It is one from which the reverential adorer of the Divine Redeemer may be apt, on its being first presented to him, to shrink and recoil. And yet I do not see how that conclusion can be avoided or evaded, if the fact of the incarnation is admitted, together with the doctrine founded upon it,—the doctrine of

the indissoluble union of the two natures in the one person of the incarnate Son.

Nor, I am persuaded, will the devout student of Scripture, the humble searcher after truth, upon fuller, deeper meditation, be disposed to turn away from it. It will probably occur to such a man that there is one remarkable passage, at least, which seems to indicate something like what I have been inferring. I mean the passage (1 Cor. xv. 28) in which the consummation of the Son's mediatorial reign is anticipated. Whatever difficulty there may be in determining the precise nature of the change which, as there announced, is to take place in the Son's state at that era, one thing would seem to be expressly asserted. He is to be "subject unto him which did put all things under him." So direct a declaration cannot but have weight with all who are content to believe the simple word of God ; and it will go far to reconcile them to a view which otherwise they might be slow to admit. Then, besides, it may probably occur to them, as they reflect upon the whole subject, that any feeling they may have had against the view in question, may have arisen out of inadequate and unworthy conceptions of what subjection or service in the kingdom of the Father really is ; especially of what it is when it is associated with sonship.

Certainly, when he was on earth, our Lord gave no indication of his considering the position of a subject and servant either irksome or degrading. He

counted it an honour and a joy to be subject to the Father, and to serve the Father. Why, then, should it be deemed incredible that this should be his honour and his joy for ever? Why should we not hail and welcome the thought that it is this honour and this joy that he is to share with us, when we, having overcome, sit with him in his throne, even as he, having overcome, sits with the Father in his throne?\*

\* See Appendix I., on the Glory of Filial Service.



## LECTURE THIRD.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, AS KNOWN OR REVEALED BEFORE THE INCARNATION.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.”  
GAL. iv. 4.

I PROPOSE now to raise the question ;—To what extent was the fatherhood of God matter of human knowledge, or matter of divine revelation, before the coming of his Son Jesus Christ in the flesh? It is a question which necessarily emerges out of the view that has been given of the fatherhood of God, as manifested in the person of the incarnate Son. And it is moreover a question which, in that view, is preliminary to another inquiry, and one that goes deep into the heart of the whole subject, namely this :—Is the relation which God sustains to his son Jesus Christ come in the flesh, his only true and proper fatherhood? And is it by their being made personally partakers,—in a qualified sense and to a limited extent,—yet still really and truly partakers of that relation, that angels and men become sons of God?

To prepare the way for that ulterior inquiry, for the conducting of which the New Testament must of

course furnish the principal materials, I intend now to ask—at least that is my main object in asking—what the Old Testament, with the New as throwing light on the Old, says of the fatherhood of God? In other words, how far and in what way was God revealed and known as a Father in the ancient church, before the incarnation of the Son, and apart from that event? Some preliminary observations must here be allowed.

1. Before the Son of God appeared in human nature, the only conception which men could form of a relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and them must have been based on the analogy of the paternal and filial relation among themselves. And there can be little doubt that the analogy is a natural one, and to some extent also a valid one. The relation of son and father on earth is fitted,—and probably, in its original constitution, intended,—to suggest the idea of a similar relation between earth and heaven. The creation or origination of intelligent beings, on the part of the great intelligent Creator, may thus be viewed as analogous to the act by which a human father produces a son like himself. And the Creator's providence over his creatures may be likened to the human father's care and tenderness towards his children. Such representations of God, accordingly, are not uncommon even among heathen writers, especially the poets; as might easily be shown by familiar quotations.

2. In considering such representations, however, and especially in reasoning upon them, it is necessary to keep in view an ambiguity of which the analogy admits. God may be called father, simply as having caused his creatures to exist, and not as thereafter sustaining a really personal and paternal relation to them. That, I apprehend, is all that is actually meant in not a few of the passages usually cited. But that, it will be at once perceived, is not to the purpose of my present inquiry. It is a mere figure of speech employed to denote the creative agency or act of God. In that sense, paternity may be attributed to God with reference to mere material things ; as when God asks Job (xxxviii. 28),—"Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?"—as if he meant to assert for himself a fatherhood having the rain and the dew for sons. Obviously, in such a case, it is a merely creative fatherhood that is, with the usual boldness of vivid poetic personification, claimed and challenged for the Supreme. With more of prosaic propriety, fatherhood in this sense is attributed to God, with reference to his intelligent creatures. Even then, however, as thus restricted, it conveys no idea of any permanent personal relationship. It suggests nothing more than the idea of primeval causation or origination.

3. It is in this sense accordingly, I am persuaded, and only in this sense, that we are to understand the verse of old poetry which Paul so aptly introduced

into his speech before the Areopagus at Athens,—  
“As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” This pregnant saying, which, though originally a merely human and heathen utterance, Paul, by quoting it, of course adopts and engrosses as his own, has been supposed to indicate a relation of sonship belonging by a common right to all men, and actually subsisting in the case of all men. But if we look at it in the light of the occasion on which Paul quoted it and the purpose to which he turned it, we may see some reason to question any such interpretation or application of it. For what is the use which Paul makes of it in his argument? It is simply to expose the absurdity of rational beings ascribing their origin to what is irrational; or, which comes to the same thing, worshipping in an irrational manner him to whom they ascribe their origin, so as virtually to make him out to be irrational. That is really all;—that is the apostle’s only object, the sole and single point of his reasoning. Obviously there is no question of present personal relationship raised here at all; no question as to the footing on which men, as individuals, are with their Maker,—what he is to them and they are to him. There is simply an assertion of a common source or origin; “Are we not all his children?” If this makes God a father at all, it is in the sense in which an ancestor is held to be the father of all his posterity; it is in the sense in which Abraham is called



“the father of many nations.” Our being all God’s offspring, in that sense, sustains the apostle’s argument, and is indeed all that is necessary, or even relevant, to sustain it. Anything else, anything more, would be out of place. We dislike to have our lineage—our parentage in the line of direct and natural ascent—traced up to a gorilla, or a tadpole, or a monade. We think that our being possessed of intelligence affords a presumption in favour of our original progenitor, the primary author of our race, whoever he may be, being himself intelligent, as we are. So thought the wisest and best men in heathendom. Paul appeals to them as being of that mind. He adopts their logic, and makes it available for his own immediate object,—which is simply to expose the inconsistency of idolatrous worship. That, I repeat, is really all. The principle asserted, the ground and medium of the argument, is simply this;—that the head, or origin, or father,—whether of a long line of descendants or of a numerous race coming simultaneously into existence,—cannot be wholly dissimilar to them in nature; that if they are intelligent he must be recognised as being so, much more; and that he cannot therefore be expected to be pleased with unintelligent worship. There is no assertion here of any personal relation of fatherhood and sonship. It is merely an argument for community of nature as regards intelligence. It is, in fact, nothing more than an application of the maxim,

or axiom, that "like produces like." It appeals to the same sort of principle which Paul so powerfully brings to bear in another direction on the spiritual identity, in respect of faith, between believing Abraham and all his spiritual children (Gal. iii.; Rom. iv.) As he is, so are they; he and they alike being believers. Therefore he is their father, "the father of the faithful." And they, in respect of their joint possession with him of the common quality or attribute of faith, are his seed. The argument of Paul in his appeal to the Athenians is precisely of the same kind. As you, the offspring, are intelligent, so it is to be presumed that he whose offspring you are must be intelligent. He must, therefore, be intelligently worshipped. But all this has nothing whatever to do with the question of the personal relation in which the offspring,—that is, the individual persons composing the offspring,—are personally to stand to him whose offspring they all alike and equally are.

4. In a way very similar to this, I think another text, often cited or referred to with some confidence, is to be disposed of. Adam, it is said, is declared in Scripture to be, as he came forth from the hand of his Creator, "the son of God," or "a son of God," or simply "son of God." The only authority alleged for that statement is the closing climax, or tracing up to its source, of Luke's genealogy of our Lord. There, after a long enumeration of an ascending series of so-called sonships and fatherhoods, the

Evangelist comes at last to Adam, and says of him, —using the very same formula as in all the other cases,—“which was the son of God;”—or rather, for the phrase is all throughout elliptical, “which was of God” (Luke iii. 38). This mere rounding off or completing of the genealogy of our Lord, as traced by Luke upwards, and not, as in Matthew’s gospel, downwards;—this simple intimation that in Adam the ascending line of human descent and human parentage is lost, and that his origin must be ascribed immediately to God;—this is brought forward as if it were not only an express, but even an emphatic assertion of Adam’s proper personal sonship. Nay, it is made, as would seem, the ground of an argument for “attributing Adam’s creation to the Deity of Christ.”\* In reality, there is no idea sug-

\* See Grinfield’s *Christian Cosmos*, pp. 34, 35. The writings of this author are often very suggestive. He certainly deserves credit for bringing prominently into view the place which the Son holds in creation, as the original maker of all things, in connection with the place which he holds in redemption, as making all things new. But he rides a hobby, and rides it often to the death. It is extremely difficult to find out what precise use he means to make of what he imagines to be almost exclusively his own peculiar doctrine or discovery as to Christ’s agency in creation. At all events, in the present instance, he builds upon a rotten foundation, though not perhaps more than others have done before. Surely, on reflection, all must see that nothing more than origination is in Luke’s genealogy. It certainly does not carry us beyond the prophetic word in Deuteronomy, “Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee” (Deut. xxxii.

gested in this whole pedigree or family-tree but that of descent; son descending from father, until Adam is reached; whose descent is from no human father, but must be said to be of God. There is nothing like real fatherhood and sonship, as a permanent and personal relation, asserted here. Or if it be held to be asserted in the case of the first father named, why not in the case of the others also? But on that supposition, in strict consistency, Adam must be regarded as sustaining a relation of true and proper personal fatherhood to each and all of his descendants individually; and so must all the others all down the lines. The truth, I repeat, is that the words "the son" have no right to be in the genealogy at all. The phrase throughout should be,—“which was of”—

Setting aside, then, those passages in the Bible, as well as those passages in heathen writings, which seem to ascribe fatherhood to God, in the sense simply of origination or causation or ancestry,—with whatever kindly feeling and good will that may imply,—the question remains;—What traces or indications are there, before and apart from the incarnation of

18). This text in Deuteronomy interprets the Old Testament idea of fatherhood and sonship. And to what does it amount? Is it anything more than the relation of mere creatorship and creatureship, whether natural or figurative? Does it go at all beyond ascribing to the Creator, simply as Creator, a right, not of pater-nity, but of property, in the creature?



the Son of God, of the fatherhood of God, properly so called, or of his actually sustaining the paternal relation to his intelligent creatures and subjects, personally and individually?

In dealing with this question, I leave out of view the secular literature of antiquity;—for, in truth, it throws little or no light on the subject of my present inquiry. That inquiry is almost altogether a scriptural one;—Was God revealed as a Father to the Old Testament Church? If so, in what manner and to what extent? And of what nature is his fatherhood represented as being?

I. I begin with what I hold to be a material and fundamental fact. So far as I can see, there is no trace of anything like natural or original sonship, either in angels or in men, having ever been accepted in the church as an article of belief. That either angels or men were sons of God from the beginning of their being, is nowhere taught in holy Scripture.

1. I speak first of the angels. Those of them that fell are never once spoken of or referred to as having been before their fall sons of God. Their offence is stigmatised as pride: “the condemnation of the devil” is his being “lifted up with pride” (1 Tim. iii. 6). That is the offence of a disloyal subject, rather than of a disaffected and undutiful son. They refuse to occupy a subordinate position; to own government by authority, by law and judgment. They aspire to the liberty of independence.

It is as proud, rebellious subjects, not as ill-conditioned sons, that they disobey, and come under the condemnation of disobedience. If that be so, then it follows that it is a trial of their obedience as subjects that their faithful brethren stand. They too are tested, not as sons, but as subjects. The trial is, whether they will proudly insist on being their own masters, or meekly consent to be ruled. At any rate, it is only after their trial and its good issue, that the angels who "kept their first estate" are introduced in Scripture as sons of God.

It is in the book of Job, and there only, that the unfallen angels appear as sons of God ; for I suppose it is they who are meant when it is said, twice over, that "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job i. 6 ; ii. 1). I doubt, indeed, if according to Hebrew idiom this title, as here given to them, can be fairly held to imply more than a mere antagonism or antithesis to the adversary of God, "Satan," who "came among them." But there is another passage where it must be allowed that this explanation will not apply. It occurs at the opening of that sublime address in which—after the sophistries of the three bigoted friends and the noble appeal of the generous Elihu—the Lord himself takes the matter in hand and reduces Job to silence (Job xxxviii. 1-7). There that much-afflicted but as yet too self-righteous patriarch is thus abruptly challenged : "Where wast thou when I laid

the foundations of the earth?" Wast thou with me then, as a party to my counsels and my working "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" There can scarcely be a doubt that it is the elect angels who are here meant. And they are called sons of God absolutely; not merely in the way of contrast to any other parties, or contradistinction from them; but simply in respect of their own gracious character and standing.

This I take to be the only unequivocal intimation of the sonship of the angels which the Old Testament Church ever got. I admit it, or rather I hold it, to be emphatic. But it is so chiefly, as it appears to me, in a prospective point of view, and in its bearing on subsequent scriptural hints and discoveries.

For, as I think, it fits in remarkably to Balaam's prophecy (Num. xxiv. 17), "There shall come a star out of Jacob;"—and also to that announcement in the very close of the Revelation (xxii. 16), "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Thus followed out, it suggests large and high thoughts as to the connection of the sonship of the holy angels with that of Christ. And if we take in another text, in which Christ, addressing the church at Thyatira, says of "him that overcometh" (Rev. ii. 28), "I will give him the morning star,"—it may seem probable that some sort of joint-fellowship of angels and men in Christ's sonship is what, by thus connecting together, in so close a verbal

relation, the widely-separated books of Job and the Revelation, the Spirit intends to teach. For thus we find the title, "morning star," which is associated with that of "son of God" in the case of the angels, applied to the Son of God himself, and in him also to the overcoming Christian.\*

But anything like such community of sonship could be only very imperfectly taught, if taught at all, to the Old Testament Church, by such a brief notice as that which the book of Job contains. To

\* It is not necessary for my present argument to inquire particularly into the meaning of these remarkable texts, which seem to associate so intimately the filial rank and relation in the spiritual firmament with the ushering in of the morning dawn in the natural heaven. The image of the morning star is as suggestive in a religious point of view as it is poetically beautiful. In particular, as used in these texts taken together, it surely points to the identification of unfallen angels and redeemed men with the second person in the Godhead. Whatever it imports, as descriptive of the bright and blessed effulgence of dawn growing into glorious noon, is common to him and them. He is the morning star. He is so, emphatically and pre-eminently—himself alone. He avows himself to be so at the very close of his Revelation (xxii. 16): "I am the bright and morning star." But it is not a "starship" belonging to him simply in his original divine nature and condition. It belongs to him as "the root and offspring of David." It belongs to him in the character and capacity which formed the ground of the riddle that, in the days of his flesh, he propounded to the Pharisees (Matthew xxii. 45): "If David call him," the Messiah, "Lord, how is he then his Son?" In that view he shares it with all who own him as David's Lord, and therefore their Lord also; while they welcome him as David's son, and therefore also their brother. His "starship," in a word, is his "sonship." It



the men who had simply that, and nothing more than that, the juxtaposition of the titles "morning stars" and "sons of God" could convey little or no clear information. It might rather indeed occasion perplexity. However well they might understand the words put into the mouth of God as a most conclusive rebuke to Job, they could scarcely gather from them any distinct idea of the sonship of angels. At all events, they would not be likely to gather from them any idea of the sonship of angels being,

is his "sonship" in the process of its development from earliest streak of morning to fullest blaze of noon. Hence the association of the two—"starship" and "sonship"—in the holy angels as witnessing our earth's creation. That was to them the dawn of a new day. The Son was then to them as "the morning star," ushering in a new manifestation of the unclouded glory of God. They are one with him—intelligently and cordially one with him—so far as their natural capacity and their information at the time admit. They are one with him as the Son. But his sonship is only then beginning to be unfolded. It is as the shining of the morning star. It is, therefore, as "morning stars" that they are "sons of God."

This original idea or image being once recognised, it is not difficult to see how, under Old Testament conditions, it could be only very imperfectly and obscurely developed—as, for instance, in Balaam's prophecy. Nor is it strange that, even under New Testament light, it should not bulk much in our view. It is a mere figure, indicating little more than the gradual and growing manifestation of the relation in question. That relation, however, is surely thus proved to be the original filial relation of the Son to the Father, now wonderfully shared with unfallen angels and redeemed men.

as a real personal relation, natural and original. The title must rather, I think, have appeared to them, like the other title "morning star," to be merely figurative and analogical. And in any view, it belongs to them as having stood the trial which proved fatal to their fellows.

2. As the angels are not represented in the word of God in the character of sons of God by nature and from the beginning of their being, so neither is man represented as sustaining it.

There is not a hint of sonship in all that is said of Paradise, or of man's sin and fall there. Nay, I hold that what is revealed of God's treatment of Adam, in the garden, is palpably irreconcilable with the idea of anything like the paternal and filial relation subsisting between them.

Adam is tried simply as a creature, intelligent and free ;—as a subject under authority and law. Not a hint is given of his having violated, when he transgressed, any filial obligation. Nor, in the sentence pronounced upon him, is there any trace whatever of his being subjected to fatherly discipline and correction. All about it is strictly, I should say exclusively, forensic and judicial. It is the legal condemnation of a subject or servant ;—not the fatherly chastisement of a son.

No doubt, hope of recovery is held out. But it is held out in a way strictly and exclusively indicative of legal judgment and legal deliverance. The deliverer

is to prevail over the tempter by becoming himself a victim ; a victim to outraged authority ; a substitute for those whom the devil has tried to ruin ; bearing in his own person the doom impending by a righteous award over them ; accepting the curse which the great deceiver has brought upon them ; and doing so to the effect of destroying him and emancipating them.

Accordingly the remedial work of Christ is always represented in the Scriptures,—in exact consistency with their representation of the evil to be remedied,—as purely and wholly legal, forensic, and judicial. That is its character, so far as it consists in his becoming his people's surety and ransom. He redeems them from the curse of the law. It is nowhere said that he atones for any filial offence ; any offence committed by them as sons against God as their father. If they sinned in that character and relation, their sin, so far as appears from Holy Scripture, is up to this hour unexpiated. Surely that is a conclusion somewhat startling. And yet it seems to me to follow inevitably, and by the inexorable force of logic, from the notion of man's original relation to God being filial.\*

\* This, as it seems to me, is a sort of *experimentum crucis* ; as such, it must be fully met and satisfactorily disposed of. Is there any hint whatever in Scripture of the fall being a fall from a filial state ? Is the sin which caused it represented anywhere in all the Bible as a breach of the filial relation ? Is it possible, upon the

II. The manner in which the expression "sons of God" is used in the Hebrew Scriptures is very vague and indefinite. It is not very often used. And many of the instances in which it is used are such as to indicate that it is little more than an idiomatic way of identifying the godly as distinguished from the ungodly ; or Israel as distinguished from the Gentiles. Personal relationship is not really in such instances a relevant thought. Thus, in the narrative of that breaking down of the wall of division and demarcation between the church and the world which brought on the sweeping judgment of the flood, "the sons of God" are contrasted with "the daughters of men"

supposition of its being so, to construct anything like an adequate evangelical representation of the atonement? Judgment, judicial retribution, the just award of guilt according to strict law strictly administered—these are the ideas, and the only ideas, which underlie the principle of expiatory or propitiatory sacrifice. But it is all out of place—irrelevant, nay, offensively inconsistent and incongruous—if it is a breach of the filial relation that is to be repaired. In that case, the whole apparatus and arrangement of the Cross, considered as a real judicial transaction—as the real and actual punishment of the guilty by the substitution of a willing and holy divine victim in their stead—must be explained away. No doubt there may remain, even though that meaning is blotted out, a certain power in the Cross to manifest divine love ; and the love may be called fatherly love. But it is not really so. In the Cross, thus baldly and barely viewed, we see the Father putting the Son through the experience of fallen men to the utmost extremity of suffering which that experience can involve. For what end? To satisfy justice on behalf of criminals—to expiate their guilt? No. But to encourage lapsed children in their return to their Father. But



(Gen. vi.) But it would be unwarrantable to found upon the phrase, as there used, anything more than that those so called were professedly of the number who, when the wickedness of Cain's race became rampant, separated themselves, and "began to call upon the name of the Lord," or, "to call themselves by the name of the Lord" (iv. 26). In other cases also the phrase "sons of God" is evidently used in the vague analogical sense in which the Jews were wont to apply it,—and in which we too do not object to apply it,—as appropriate to any relation implying benefit on the one side and dependence on the other, with corresponding feelings of endearment on both sides. Thus a master calls his loved scholar his son. So also

is such a procedure really needed for their encouragement? Is it, in fact, any encouragement at all? Does it not tend to invest the fatherly and filial relation with a very awful and impenetrable gloom, when it comes out that the father cannot receive back his erring children into his favour, otherwise than on the condition of his holy "firstborn" Son becoming a sufferer and a victim on their behalf? All is clear and simple, however, if the substitutionary work of Christ is held to have reference to the purely legal and judicial relation as that originally subsisting between God and man. But the introduction of the relation of fatherhood and sonship confounds all. For, in fact, the two relations cannot be conceived of as originally combined; certainly not in the instance of a race liable to fall, and now actually fallen. They must be dealt with either as guilty subjects, or as undutiful sons. The method of recovery must be adapted to one or other of these two views of their condition.

I would have evangelical thinkers to ponder this alternative well. The looser and broader school of speculators understand its meaning and its bearings very thoroughly.

the pupils of the prophets are called their sons. "And such an one as Paul" appeals to Timothy as "his own son in the faith." In like manner, when the Lord promises in Hosea (i. 10), "In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God," it seems plain that no new or peculiar relation is meant by the latter phrase, as if it were in contrast with the former. And in the same way, as I apprehend, we must interpret those appeals in Jeremiah and Malachi—the most emphatically paternal in their terms to be found in the Old Testament (Jer. xxxi. 20), "Is Ephraim my son? Is he a pleasant child?" (Mal. i. 6), "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then, I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear?" It is the language of intense affection, putting his people upon honour in terms of their own profession.\*

\* These four Old Testament texts—Gen. vi. 2, Hosea i. 10, Jer. xxxi. 20, Mal. i. 6—are all that can be supposed to teach a relation of fatherhood and sonship, practically available for personal appeal. I would not wish to weaken the force of any one of them, as introducing an element that aggravates man's guilt and enhances God's forbearance. That the universal corruption ushering in the deluge had its rise in the worldly conformity of those to whom the high title of children or sons of God was in any sense appropriate (Gen. vi. 2); that so high a designation should be still within the reach of apostate Israel (Hosea i. 10); that the Lord should yearn over Ephraim as "His dear son, a pleasant child" (Jer. xxxi. 20); and that he should urge his claim on his people as at least equal to

III. The passages in the Old Testament are thus seen to be very few, which even appear to assert anything like a distinct personal relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and his people individually.

No doubt, in the church or nation viewed collectively, the Lord sometimes claims a father's right of property. Thus he sends an urgent message to Pharaoh (Exod. iv. 22, 23), "Israel is my son, even my first-born; let my son go that he may serve me." And he gives this as his reason for bringing the people back from captivity (Jer. xxxi. 9), "For I am a father unto Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." The collective church, or nation, also occasionally appeals to that of a father and a master in an ordinary human household (Mal. i. 6);—all that is most emphatic. But there is nothing in it all like the assertion or implication of real and proper fatherhood and sonship as a relation subsisting personally between God and the individual man. I would not explain away these and similar texts; on the contrary, I would press them into my service. I would especially do so if I were elaborating proof in support of the opinion which I strongly hold, that from the beginning the relation, in the noblest sense of it, was contemplated as the perfection of created intelligence; and that accordingly all nature is cast in that mould, and all revelation points in the same line. At the same time, when alleged as evidence of the relation being known to the Old Testament church—so as to form any part of its theology or any element of its piety—such rare and isolated passages are altogether without point and without power. They are merely conventional or rhetorical modes of speech;—conventional, when they simply designate one set of people as distinct from another;—rhetorical, when they are made the ground of complaint, or expostulation, or entreaty.

the Lord on that ground ; as in Isaiah (lxiii. 16), "Thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer ;" and again (lxiv. 8), "But now, O Lord, thou art our father ; we are the clay, and thou our potter : and we are all the work of thy hand." In these instances, however, though a certain paternity is ascribed to God, as choosing, constituting, redeeming, creating, his people Israel, it is a figurative paternity, having for its object simply "Israel as a spiritual or ideal person ;"\* not that real fatherhood of which individuals are the objects. Nor is even that most pathetic passage in Jeremiah to the point,—the passage, I mean, in which the Lord puts into the mouth of the repenting people the affecting language of filial tenderness (iii. 4), "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth ?" For the context plainly shows

\* See Alexander on Isaiah lxiii. 16, and lxiv. 7 (Dr. Eadie's edition, 1848). Dr. Alexander's remarks apply also to Jer. xxxi. 9. Indeed that text in Jeremiah is conclusive, I think, in favour of the opinion that it is simply Israel, or the Church collective, as an ideal person, that is meant, in the few places where sonship or heirship seems to be implied ;—and not at all individual believers realising personally and practically any such relation. It may be added, moreover, that what is chiefly if not exclusively asserted, with reference to Israel collectively, is the Lord's interest in him as being analogous to a sort of right of primogeniture. Israel stands out among the nations as occupying the pre-eminent position which the first-born in a family possesses, and therefore as belonging to Jehovah in a very special manner, such as warrants his reclaiming him authoritatively out of other hands, and his insisting on his allegiance to himself alone.



that it is not the relation of parent and child at all that is referred to, but that of husband and wife ; the conjugal relation, not the paternal. The idea suggested—and it could be better understood and felt according to old Eastern manners than according to our modern notions—is that of the faithless young wife casting herself at the feet of her injured husband, pleading her tender years, and making her plaintive appeal,—as to a sire rather than a spouse,—“ My father, thou art the guide of my youth !” Clearly there is here no claim of sonship, properly so called.

IV. In marked contrast with these vague and indefinite modes of speech,—in which ideas of paternal authority and filial tenderness are for the most part, as it would seem, merely borrowed to illustrate other relationships,—I notice the clear, exact, and unequivocal precision with which real and proper personal sonship is ascribed to one individual, and to one only.

There is a Son of God revealed in the Old Testament. He is revealed as standing alone and apart. There is not much said of him in that character, it is true ; indeed, there is very little. And nothing at all is said of the bearing of his sonship on others besides himself. For this, before I close, I may suggest a probable reason. But a Son of God there is in the ancient Scriptures. And however rare may be the passages in which he appears, and however few the words in which he is described, his sonship is beyond all question not figurative, but true sonship. In the

oracle which the second Psalm records, "Thou art my son;"—in the prediction of the eighty-ninth Psalm, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, . . . I will make him my firstborn;"—and perhaps also in the song of triumph in the eighth chapter of Isaiah, "Unto us a son is given;"—chiefly, however, in the great original oracle;—the sonship of a person is declared.

How far the ancient church understood the oracle;—whether or not they held this personal and individual Son of God to be divine, or identified him with the Jehovah of their worship, or with the promised Messiah;—I am not now concerned to inquire. There has been much ingenious speculation on all these questions; and it has been argued with great power that, at least among the later Jews about our Lord's time, an opinion prevailed admitting the Son to be a divine person, but separating him from the Christ.\* Be that as it may, my present object is simply to direct attention to the precision of the language which the Holy Spirit takes care shall be used, when the idea of true and proper personal fatherhood and sonship is to be expressed, as affording a presumption that no such relation is really meant to be asserted when the phraseology is of a looser and less determinate kind.

V. I would only advert in a sentence to one other consideration which seems to me all but decisive in

\* See Treffrey on the Eternal Sonship, ch. ii. sect. ii. pp. 80-102.

support of my idea of the teaching of the Old Testament on this subject. I mean the very remarkable absence, in the recorded religious experiences and devotional utterances of the Old Testament saints, of the filial element. I may have occasion to touch on this topic again. I notice it now as a fact which cannot well be disputed, and which surely must be allowed to be a fact of great significancy, in relation to our present inquiry.

On the whole, I am disposed to conclude that, so far as we can gather information or evidence from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the fatherhood of God was not revealed to the ancient Church, either as a relation common to all his intelligent creatures generally, or as a relation belonging to the obedient angels and believing men specially; that any use made of the analogy of this relation as it exists among men, in the way of applying it to the dispositions and dealings of God, was little more than rhetorical; and that, in fact, there was great reserve maintained on the part of the great revealer with reference to this whole subject.

But it may be asked, does the New Testament afford no materials for helping us in the determination of the question? I am persuaded that it does, in several places. I solicit attention to two passages in particular.

The first is in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is a passage, as I believe, fitted to have great weight with those who, in the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, are prepared to receive as the teaching of the Spirit, not only what is “expressly set down in Scripture,” but also what, “by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture.” My argument will undoubtedly be based on a process of inferential reasoning; a mode of proof against which some very respectable men, especially in our country, seem to have a strange and unaccountable antipathy. It may be convenient sometimes, when one sees an unwelcome conclusion looming in the distance, to refuse all inferences, and to demand *ipsissima verba*—explicit and articulate chapter and verse—for everything. But we are commanded to “search the Scriptures;” and we are commanded also “in understanding to be men.” To those obeying these commands, in the spirit of them, I do not think my argument will appear very far-fetched, although it ranges over several chapters, and connects somewhat distant verses.

At the close of the tenth chapter, Paul quotes the Old Testament saying, “The just shall live by faith;” and he proceeds immediately in his glorious muster-roll of the worthies of the olden time, to give instances of “the just living by faith.” He ends his enumeration thus : “These all”—the just living by faith—“received not the promise ; God having pro-



vided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (xi. 39, 40).

What is that "better thing" which they, while they "lived by faith," and when, as the apostle had previously said, they "died in faith," had not?—which God has provided for us?—which they must share with us if they are to be made perfect? For, it would seem, they cannot be made perfect without it, and they cannot have it apart from us. Is it merely the general blessing of clearer light and fuller joy consequent upon the complete revelation of the gospel plan, through the actual advent of the long-promised Saviour, and the actual accomplishment of the great salvation? Or is it some particular benefit, precise and well defined, which really effects a change in their standing or position?

Let us carry our view forward.

After pondering devoutly the practical appeal in the beginning of the twelfth chapter, founded upon our being "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," let us approach the august picture presenting itself to our adoring gaze before the chapter ends (verses 22-24). What have we here? A scene at Zion analogous and corresponding to the scene at Sinai of old, with which it is contrasted. It is ideal, spiritual, heavenly—but not the less on that account revealing real truth. The redeemed of all ages are represented as brought together to meet their redeeming God. Setting aside the locality and the wit-

nesses of which the first of the three verses (ver. 22) speaks ; and the mediator and the mediation brought forward in the third (ver. 24) ; we have the real meeting in the verse which intervenes (ver. 23). It consists of " the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect."

Sitting on a central throne is God the judge of all ; his people's saviour, but still their judge ; the judge of all of them. On either side there stands a vast company.

Who are these on the one side ? " The firstborn written" or registered " in heaven." They are there in their character of sons and heirs. They are there in full " assembly," yet in the capacity of a select body, " a church." The expression " firstborn, registered in heaven," properly denoting the possession of the filial birthright, describes the position of those referred to elsewhere, when Christ is spoken of as destined to be " the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29). He alone is, strictly speaking, the firstborn. To him belongs the birthright, the right of primogeniture. He is the Son ; and, as the Son, the heir of all things. But he shares his birthright, or right of primogeniture, with many brethren. They all accordingly in him become in a sense firstborn ;—sons and heirs. And they are registered as such in heaven. The position of believers under the dispensation of the gospel is thus characteristically marked.

I can scarcely doubt that it is the entire body of New Testament believers who are mystically, as it were, and by a sublime figure, set before us, as convened, in a universal but select church-convocation, on one side of "God the judge of all."

Who then are they who are seen by the eye of faith standing on the other side? "The spirits of just men made perfect." I cannot admit that this means merely the pious dead generally. I cannot forget that a particular class of "just men" have been brought prominently out in the very passage of which this magnificent pictorial representation of the gathering together of all the saved is the close. "Just men" have been spoken of, who in the days of old lived by faith and died in faith, who yet were not "made perfect." There was a certain incompleteness, a certain defect, in or about their spiritual state, while they lived and when they died. And the defect could not be altogether remedied,—their state could not be thoroughly put right,—apart from Christian believers. It is they, I am satisfied, who are to be regarded as standing together with the firstborn registered in heaven, before Jehovah's awful throne. They are made perfect now. Perfect! in what respect? Surely one can scarcely help drawing the conclusion, in respect of their sharing with the firstborn their privilege of sonship and right of primogeniture, becoming out and out sons, as they are.\*

\* See Appendix II. for a fuller exposition of this passage.

The other passage which I adduce is in the Epistle to the Galatians. In the beginning of the fourth chapter, Paul draws a contrast between believers under the law, and believers under the gospel. Of the former, he thus writes :—" Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of this world." Of the latter, " But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." It is admitted, or rather strongly asserted by the apostle, that the Old Testament believer is an heir. Being a child of Abraham, in virtue of his having and exercising the same faith that Abraham had and exercised, he really has all the rights of a son and heir in the family of God. But these rights are partially in abeyance during the period of pupillage or nonage. He cannot avail himself of them all ; he is not fully acquainted with them all. His place in the family is rather that of a servant than that of a son. Such, says Paul, was the position even of the true members



of the church before gospel times. But, he adds, their position is now changed. And what effects the change? God sending forth his Son, and the Spirit of his Son. It is very plainly intimated that it is through God's sending forth his Son, as his Son, that they receive the adoption of sons; and that it is through God's sending forth into their hearts the Spirit, as the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father, that they realise their receiving the adoption of sons. If sons before, they were so prospectively, and as it were potentially—*in posse*, rather than *in esse*. They are sons now really and truly, in a sense and to an effect impossible before. They saw, indeed, the day of Christ afar off, and were glad. They saw his holy person in the spotless lamb; his atoning death in the paschal sacrifice. But they saw him not as the Son of God. And till he is so seen, even believing men cannot receive, so as to realise it, the adoption of sons; they cannot conceive what true sonship really is. It is the manifested sonship of Christ that alone opens up the way for his believing people becoming sons indeed, and having in them the spirit of sonship, the Spirit of God's very Son, crying, Abba, Father.

Now, if such a change was thus effected in the spiritual position of living believers, and in their consciousness of it, is there any difficulty in apprehending the thought of a similar change taking place in the case of the dead? Is there anything incredible in the idea of these grand old worthies—"the just

who lived by faith and died in faith"—coming to know their Redeemer as God's Son and their brother, in a way in which they never could know him, till they saw him "sent forth made of a woman, made under the law?" And what a large accession of holy joy might their new knowledge of him impart! They have never been separated from him since they left the world, for they are one with him. They have known and loved him well. But now they behold a new thing—his sonship in their nature. And beholding that glory of God, they are changed into the same image. The single drawback, the solitary element of inferiority attached to their saved state, is gone. Not in an ideal sense only, but in real heavenly fellowship, they are now on the same footing with Stephen, and James, and the noble army of martyrs, and all the faithful who, falling asleep in Jesus, depart to be with him. The just are made perfect as sons.

Thus, as it seems to me, the opinion which is suggested by a calm survey of the teaching of the Old Testament on the question,—How far the fatherhood of God was revealed to the Old Testament Church,—is corroborated by what we find in the intimations of the New Testament.

There are two observations which I wish before closing to make on the view which I have ventured to submit.

1. In the first place, I think I can see a reason

for reserve, as regards the full discovery of God's fatherhood, before the coming of Christ. I can see some risk likely to arise from its being prematurely disclosed, and some benefit in its being in a great degree shaded and concealed.

I remarked at the outset that, apart from the incarnation,—and what is seen in the earthly and human life of the Son of the footing on which, as the Son, he is with the Father, and the manner of their mutual intercourse as Father and Son with one another,—all our conceptions of fatherhood in God, as a relation which he sustains towards any of his creatures, must have been simply analogical ; based on the analogy of the relation of father and son as it subsists among men. But that analogy is originally inadequate ; and, since the fall, it is positively unsafe.

I believe, indeed, that the existence of the paternal and filial relation among men, from the beginning, has reference to the eternal relation of fatherhood and sonship in the Godhead, and to the ultimate development of that relation in the standing of all saved intelligences. I entirely agree with those who maintain that this forms part, and a chief part, of the image and likeness of God, in which man was originally made.\* The divine relation is not a mere analogical inference from the human. The human is formed upon the model of the divine, and expressly in order

\* See Treffrey on the Eternal Sonship, chap. ii. sect. v. pages 156, 157.

to be its analogical representative. Adam's being a father is not the type of God's paternity. Rather, in the sense of being the mould into which it is cast, God's paternity is the type of his.

In that view I can conceive of the angels welcoming the introduction on the stage of being of a race meant to exhibit this relation. They could form no idea of it from the manner of their own existence. They had been, so far as appears, simultaneously created ; all of them alike in full possession of mature intelligence. They had been all of them simultaneously tried and tested ; and the faithful among them had made good their position simultaneously, as the subjects and servants of the Most High. If the reward of their obedience was to be sonship ;—especially if it was to be sonship somehow after the model of the relation of the second person to the first in the ever adorable Trinity ;—they might well be at a loss to conceive any adequate notion of a relation so utterly beyond the reach of their own experience. But now they see a race of new intelligences called into existence ; in whose constitution and history a relation is to be exhibited that may at least be a faint shadow of the divine relation, to some sort of participation in which they are taught to aspire. They rejoice in the help thus given towards their understanding the relation of fatherhood in which God is to stand to them. But alas ! the dawn is soon overcast. Sin comes in ; and its blight taints and blasts the earthly relation



which should have been the image of the heavenly. It is better for the angels now that the full discovery of this relation should be deferred till the Son of God himself appears as a creature ;—to show what, for the creatures, it really is.

The postponement was equally expedient, or rather even more expedient, as regards men. What materials were there in these old times, what materials are there now, for the construction of a notion of fatherhood in God upon the analogy of fatherhood in man? One of the best perhaps of human fathers, since the fall, is Abraham. But was he faultless in that relation? Or shall we take Jacob? or Eli? or David? If the Old Testament Church—if Old Testament believers—had been asked to worship God as their father, was there no danger of their conceiving of him whom they worshipped, after such unsafe analogies as these?

There is the same danger still ; and it is urgent. It is the unbelief of the day. I have little hesitation in saying that the merely analogical view of the fatherhood of God lies at the root of much, if not all, of our modern current infidelity. How, indeed, can it fail, unless very carefully guarded, to breed infidelity? It must do so doubly, in two ways. Human parents, on the one hand, are weak, fallible, selfish, capricious ;—holding with unsteady hand the balance of equity ; unreasonably passionate, yet fondly placable. And, on the other hand, they who

conceive of God's fatherhood as like the fatherhood of human parents, are but too ready to reconcile themselves to precisely such a view of God as that which the analogy is but too apt to suggest.

I believe it to be God's purpose to set aside, to a large extent, if not altogether, all analogical apprehensions of his fatherhood. I believe he means us to look exclusively, or all but exclusively, to the manner of life of his Son Jesus Christ, and to draw our notions of his fatherhood directly from thence. Here there is no analogy ; or, if there is, it is all the other way. It is not analogical reasoning from the human to the divine, but from the divine to the human. There is presented before our eyes the actual working out, in human nature and human experience, of the only relation of fatherhood and sonship which God would have us to realise as possible between himself and us. He would be our father, not as we are the fathers of our children, but as he is the father of his Son Jesus Christ.

I do not urge any question as to the original purpose of God in instituting a relation of fatherhood in man ;—or as to how his original purpose might have been served, if the relation had not been practically vitiated by the fall. It might, in that case, have been, within certain limits and under certain cautions and reservations, the source and ground of a pure and sound analogy. And so far as it partakes of the redeeming and renewing grace of the gospel, it may

be so still ;—and may be so more and more. But God has not trusted to that. He has revealed his fatherhood, not analogically but expressly, in his incarnate Son. And there is divine wisdom in his keeping silence, for the most part, upon the whole subject, until the fulness of the time for that revelation came.

2. The other observation which I wish to make arises naturally out of this last thought. The divine wisdom in this arrangement is signally manifested in the character and spirit of Old Testament piety, as that was necessarily moulded by the sort of religious life which it occasioned.

I have already noticed the fact that there is little, or I think I may almost say nothing, of the filial element, in the recorded spiritual experiences and spiritual exercises of Old Testament believers. The Psalms entirely want it. The nearest approach to it, perhaps, is that most tenderly expressed analogy (Ps. ciii. 13) : “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” The same sort of analogy is suggested elsewhere. Thus in Malachi God says (iii. 17) : “I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him ;”—in Deuteronomy (viii. 5) : “Thou shalt consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee ;”—and in Proverbs (iii. 12) : “Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”

In these instances, the very nearness of the approach to the assertion of God's fatherhood makes the stopping short of it all the more noticeable. The last instance in particular is, in that view, not a little significant. The verse from Proverbs is quoted in Hebrews (xii. 6). And the inspired writer, in quoting it, does not scruple to throw it into New Testament form, for the purpose of his inspired New Testament appeal:—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Fatherhood is in the text, as Paul was inspired to give it. But it is not in the text as it stands in the Old Testament. All that is there is a similitude;—a "like as," or "so as," or "even as."\*

But apart from minute criticism, I suppose it will not be denied, that in Old Testament piety there is not anything like a full recognition—scarcely, indeed, any recognition at all—of that personal relation of fatherhood and sonship which enters so largely and so deeply into the prevailing spirit of Christian devotion. The consideration of this fact might suggest a line of thought and investigation intensely interesting; on which, however, I cannot now enter at any length. I can only throw out a hint or two.

It must, I think, greatly enhance our admiration of the godly men of old, and of their godliness, when we listen to their utterances of praise and prayer, or

\* See supplementary volume; Reply to Dr. Crawford.



search the records of their manifold spiritual experiences and deep exercises of soul, to bear in mind how little they were permitted to know of God as a father. Their close walk with him, their strong trust in him, their fervent desire after him, the warmth of their affection, the poignancy of their sense of sin, the liveliness of their heavenly joy—these and other features of their personal religion must appear, in the view of this condition attaching to it, more and more wonderful the more we examine and reflect upon them. It might be not unprofitable also to inquire, how far that condition may explain some of the peculiarities of their holy aspirations and contendings; the restlessness, the impatience, the dark questionings and misgivings, the passionate outbursts even, which their writings occasionally indicate; the sort of wailing cry for something better which breaks from them; and the eager, intense expectancy of their air and attitude, like that of children in a strange place, longing to be taken to some unknown home. Again, it might be well to mark, in searching these old books, and specially the psalms and prophetic songs, how marvellously the Holy Spirit has so inspired them, that this absence of what has since been so fully revealed,—which might be supposed to be a drawback,—is in truth the very quality which best fits them for universal use, in all ages of the Church till the end comes. For it is that which makes them most expressive of the groans and sighs

of lost humanity ; its tossings, strivings, fightings, until it finds its God ; its strange vicissitudes of joy, fear, hope, even after it has found him. And then, finally, one might usefully inquire how, in virtue of its very imperfection, the divinity of the Old Testament prepares the way for that of the New ; how the knowledge and worship of God, as Creator, Governor, Lord, lays the best and only safe foundation for the knowledge and worship of him as Father ; how in this, as in other respects, “the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

7-

## LECTURE FOURTH.

THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD ON HIS OWN SONSHIP  
AND THE SONSHIP OF HIS BRETHREN.

“The first-born among many brethren.”—ROMANS viii. 29.

THE fatherhood of God is revealed in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, and in his life on earth. If we would conceive aright of what it is for God to be our father and for us to be his sons, it is to that model that we must chiefly look.

The Old Testament church had little or no knowledge of God being a father, in the sense of his sustaining a proper personal relation of fatherhood to men individually. When I say that, I do not of course mean that he was not the father of those who believed in his name; really and truly their father; as much so before as after the incarnation. I mean only that he did not see fit to reveal himself clearly and unreservedly in that character. And I think I have shown good reason for some reserve being maintained until the relation in its full integrity could be manifested. Neither do I forget that Israel collectively is sometimes spoken of by the Lord as his son—with reference for the most part to the

rights involved in the law of primogeniture among men—and is therefore constituted a type of Christ. Thus, to name one remarkable instance, or rather one decisive proof, Matthew quotes the message of the Lord to Pharaoh; or Hosea's reference to it; as receiving its fulfilment in Christ: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Still, with a full admission of all these premonitions, I am persuaded that, as a definite personal relation subsisting between God and individual men, the fatherhood of God did not form part of the revelation given to the church under the old economies.

All this reserve is at an end when the Son himself opens his mouth. "The man Christ Jesus" called God his father in a way quite unprecedented. Not even his forerunner, the Baptist, used the name as he did. There is no trace of God's fatherhood in John's teaching;—unless it be that on one occasion, upon the warrant of the voice from heaven, he says, "I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God" (John i. 34). With Jesus himself, the title "Father," as applied to God, is a familiar household word.

I. And yet, as I think, he uses it with careful and studied discrimination.

Thus, for example, I do not know that there is one instance recorded of his using the title of Father with reference to the world at large, or to men generally; or, indeed, with reference to any but those



whom he was pleased to regard as his disciples, and to address and treat accordingly. He speaks to them of God as their father;—and, so far as my observation goes, to them only. I cannot call to mind a single case in which he gives God that appellation in dealing with the promiscuous crowds that resorted to him. Nay, there is at least one case—there may be more, but let one suffice—in which he makes a very marked distinction.

It occurs in the twelfth chapter of Luke's Gospel. "One of the company"—the crowd literally—asks Jesus to assume the office of judge between him and his brother in the matter of the family inheritance (ver. 13). After declining that position (ver. 14), the Lord takes the opportunity of warning the company, or crowd, against the sin of covetousness. "He said unto them,"—"he spake a parable unto them" (vers. 15-21). In thus addressing them he uses simply the term "God" (ver. 20). But suddenly he turns from the multitude to his disciples. The incident suggests a lesson for them also;—a lesson against care, answering to his warning to the company against covetousness. Immediately his tone changes from something approaching to severity or sternness to the utmost tenderness and affection. And after appealing to God's creative power and providential bounty as reasons for trusting him and having no anxiety, he tells them, as a stronger reason still, of "their Father knowing what they need," and of its being "their

Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom" (vers. 30 32).

I believe it will be found that our Lord observes this distinction throughout;—restricting the term to his disciples, and avoiding the use of it when he addresses others. Nor can the obvious inference deducible from this uniform practice be turned aside by the mere allegation that there must have been among those whom he chose to count as his disciples not a few who were not his disciples in reality, as among the apostles there was one traitor. The fact is admitted. But it does not touch the point of my present observation. For the same principle must be applied here which explains Scripture usage elsewhere; when the visible churches, for example, to whom the apostolic letters are written are addressed as if all their members were true believers. Men are and must be treated according to their calling and profession. On that principle his disciples are regarded by our Lord as having God to be their Father; and, so far as I can see, they alone.

II. There is, I think, another important distinction to be observed in our Lord's manner of calling God Father. I refer now to those almost countless instances in which he points to his own relation to God;—saying, "my Father," or "the Father." In so saying he sometimes has in view the relation of fatherhood and sonship between the Father and him as it subsisted from everlasting before his incarna-

tion; while at other times what he has in view is manifestly the relation as it subsists now that he has become incarnate. Of course, I hold that it is the same relation, unchanged and unmodified. But it is now shared in by his humanity, which it was not before. And this, so far, makes a difference,—not in the nature and character of the relation,—but, as it were, in the manner of its outgoings or outcomings in the person sustaining it.

Let me attempt to make my meaning somewhat more plain by means of an explanatory instance.

When Jesus made that most solemn and sublime appeal from earth to heaven,—from the cold unbelief of man to the loving heart of God—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;—even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25, 26)—none hearing the marvellous words could doubt,—at least, none reading them in faith now can doubt,—that they point far back in the past eternity to mutual counsels and infinite endearments in which his manhood never had a share. When, on the other hand, prostrated in Gethsemane's garden, he uttered first the cry of agony, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me"—and then the prayer of acquiescence, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42),—the language springs out of

trial of which his manhood bears the brunt, and obedience of which his manhood must have the credit. The Father is the same to him, and he is the same to the Father, on both occasions alike. The relation of fatherhood and sonship is the same. But he who sustains the relation of sonship has undergone a change of state. From being only God he has become also man ; from being alone with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the unapproachable unity of the one only thrice holy God, he has come to be associated and identified with a race of fallen creatures, whose sorrows he is willing to share,—whose guilt and condemnation he has consented to take upon himself. He is the same person throughout—the same in his sonship. But is it not evident that now, when he speaks as the Son occupying the last of these two positions, he may be expected, alike in what he says to his Father and in what he says of his Father, to use language proper on some occasions to his former condition, and on others again to his present condition? He cannot but speak at some times as realising, even in and all through his humiliation, what he has been to the Father and the Father to him from everlasting. He cannot but speak at other times as realising what, in virtue of his humiliation, he is to the Father and the Father to him now. But there is not on that account any difference in respect of the personal relation in which he stands to the Father. That, I repeat, is the same in both states. There is simply a distinction



between what refers back to his past and what expresses his present consciousness and experience, in that one relation which is common to both the modes of his existence, and both the periods, if I may so speak, of his history.

III. This distinction, I need scarcely say, has a very material bearing on the question as to the connection of his people's sonship with his own. Can it be a sonship of the same nature and character with his own? Can it be, in fact, their being made really and truly partners and partakers with him in his being the Son of God?

I advert to this question at this stage and in this connection, merely to the effect of considering how far such an identity is possible or conceivable;—how far it can be shown to be consistent with a due regard to the vast distance that there must ever be felt to be between an uncreated and a created being. For an opinion certainly prevails in some quarters, that to represent Christ's sonship and his people's as being of the same sort, is to confound the human and the divine. Let me say a few words on that opinion.

I begin with an illustrative or suggestive case. My father has a firstborn son; and after the lapse of, say, some quarter of a century, he has a second son, there being none between. I am that second son. As the second son, I stand to my father in the very same relation with the first. I have the same claims on him and the same place in his heart. But I hear

my elder brother continually alluding to interchanges of love and confidence between him and our common father long prior to my coming into the family. I am not surprised at these allusions, nor chagrined or vexed by them ; for my elder brother gives me the full benefit of all that they imply. Still, my real and actual communion with my brother in our joint filial relation to our common father, dates only from my coming to an intelligent apprehension of it. All before that is matter of testimony ; it is information at second-hand. I can have no fellowship, properly so called, with him in it. But for all that, my sonship is really the same relation as his, though his is of older standing than mine. Would it make much—or indeed any—difference to me if I were told that my brother's sonship had no beginning at all ? That might raise a difficulty otherwise, as regards the past,—or as regards the question how that sonship without a beginning could be possible. But it need not affect my present standing, as my brother's fellow in the relation of sonship to our common father.

Or take another parallel case. My son's wife is to me a daughter. She stands to me, as I believe and feel, in the very same relation in which my son himself stands to me. I treat them both equally as my children. I am a father equally to both. The relation is differently originated and constituted in the two. In the one it is natural, dating from the beginning of the party's existence ; in the other it is the

result of an arrangement entered into when the party has been in existence for years. But what of that? The law declares the relation to be the same, and my heart owns it to be so. My new child must be an entire stranger to the consciousness and experience of much in the relation between myself and my son, or in our realisation of it, which preceded the union that has given me a new child. But still, what of that? The whole good of the relation is now common equally to both of my children. Would it make the least difference, as regards the apprehension of present joint relationship, if the child I have got by her becoming my son's spouse were to be told that he whose spouse she is was born years or ages ago?—or even, to speak with reverence, that he was begotten from everlasting?

These, let it be remembered, are most inadequate and imperfect analogies. Still, they are analogies. And to my mind they go far to prove that there has been some confusion of thought about this whole matter. For I cannot help suspecting that there has been from of old a tendency to suppose that there is a difference of relation, when, in point of fact, the difference merely lies in the dates at which, and the grounds on which, the same relation has been constituted in different persons. In other words, the difference has been held to be essential; whereas it is in reality only circumstantial, and should accordingly be treated as such. When and how the relationship was constituted,—is one question. What it is, when-

soever and howsoever constituted,—is quite another question. And it is still a different question ;—How far two parties may partake in the same relation, though constituted, in the two, at different times and in different ways. Nor, as regards this last question, does it matter though in one it should be from everlasting.

IV. Let me anticipate a little my line of argument, and put a scriptural, and, as I think, a critical and crucial test, on this particular point.

In his farewell prayer, Christ says to the Father, “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John xvii. 24). He asserts also with reference to his disciples,—“Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me” (ver. 23). I take this last statement to be an assertion of the real and absolute identity of the love of the Father, as the Father, to the Son and to the Son’s disciples. And I ask, Is there any difference between that love and the love to which the other statement alludes—the love with which the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world? Has the Father’s love of the Son undergone any change? Has it not always been fatherly love? And now the Son’s believing people share with him in it as such. It is the same fatherly love to them that it is to him. There is no difference as to the Father’s love ;—or as to their standing, his and theirs, in the possession of it.

It is true that they can have no consciousness or



experience of it, as love in exercise "before the foundation of the world." That is exclusively his privilege, his honour, his joy. In the old eternal reminiscences, if we may dare to use the term, of that unfathomable immensity of the duration of this love,—they, the creatures of yesterday, can have no part or title. But does that consideration evacuate of meaning the truth announced by the lips of the Son himself,—surely at a time when oneness and not distinction is in his mind,—that from the moment of their believing in him the Father "loveth them as he loveth him?"—that the very "love wherewith the Father loveth him is thenceforth in them?"—and that ever after the Father is to them exactly what, as the Father, he is to him?\*

V. Let it be admitted then,—or rather let it always be very strongly asserted and strenuously maintained,—that our Lord does very frequently use language which cannot fairly admit of any other interpretation than that he claims to be the Son of the Father from before all worlds,—from all eternity. When he uses such language, he appeals to a mode or manner of his filial life with the Father, in which none else can participate. Down to the time of his

\* A critical writer puts this gloss on the phrase "hast loved them as thou hast loved me,"—"That is, with a love not equal but similar." I would be inclined to amend the gloss thus,—not equal but identical,—the self-same love, though differing in degree. I cannot imagine our Lord to have meant less than that in his wonderfully gracious identification of his disciples with himself.

assuming the human nature, in his pre-existent state before that event, he enjoys,—if I may venture so to speak,—he enjoys and exercises his sonship in a way strictly and absolutely peculiar to himself, as the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. Into that period of his filial life no man or angel dare intrude. But the case is altered when he becomes incarnate. Then he begins a new mode of filial life, of such a sort as by no means to exclude the idea of others sharing with him in it. I proceed, of course, upon the fact of the incarnation of the eternal Son,—not raising any question as to other possible ways of manifesting his sonship so as to admit of intelligent beings becoming his brethren in it.\* And when his language refers to the experience of that new kind of filial life proper to the new state into which he has entered, I can see no reason why he may not be understood as meaning that it is really and literally the kind of filial life of which he intends to make his disciples partakers, when he calls God their Father as he calls him his own Father;—that they are to be on the same footing with God on which he now is;—that the Father is to be to them what he is now to him as “having come in the flesh,” and what he will be to him in that character for ever.

Thus, I think, it may be seen that though in some of our Lord’s filial utterances and expressions we cannot go along with him,—since they refer to

\* This subject is considered in supplementary volume.

his position with the Father, and his intercourse with the Father, before he came to be one with us in our nature,—there are others proper to his new state of being, into the spirit of which we may enter. We may therefore have the same filial experience which they denote, and partake of the same filial relation which they imply.

VI. I have been endeavouring to show that the nature or character of such a relation as that of fatherhood and sonship does not depend, either upon the period of its subsistence, or upon the manner of its original constitution. And therefore I infer that there need be no difficulty, *à priori*, in conceiving of two persons standing in the same relation to a third—even though in the case of the one the relation may be dateless, and founded on a necessity of nature, while in the case of the other it may be of recent date, and formed or constituted by an act or work of grace;—especially when it is such grace as makes the two really, though mystically, one.

There is one other remark of a general kind which it seems needful to make. Identity of relation does not imply that if two parties share in it, the one may not have a far greater aptitude to apprehend it, and a far larger capacity to enter into it, than the other. There may be the widest difference between them in this respect. Perhaps no two sons in a family ever equally realise their sonship. Both of them may be dutiful, loyal, loving. But there may be in the one

a knowledge of their common father, an insight into his heart, an apprehension of his counsels, a sympathy with his pursuits, to which—at least in equal measure or degree—the other does not, and cannot attain. Still, both are sons. They are sons, as having the same footing in their common father's house, and the same hold on their common father's affection. No doubt the difference between them—in the amount of their filial insight, apprehension, and sympathy—may warrantably cause a difference in the amount of their father's affection towards the two respectively ; —or rather, one would say, in the manner of its manifestation. But it is fatherly affection towards both alike. And it is so in the same sense. The footing of both in the house is alike, and to the same effect, filial. All this is too obvious to require proof or illustration. It is only necessary to add that the difference I speak of must be vast indeed when the one Son is the Divine Redeemer, and the other a sinner redeemed ; though still it is not a difference which need at all affect the sameness of the relation.

I have thus sought to clear the way for the consideration of the main question—What does Christ mean when he represents God as being his people's Father ?

There is undoubtedly one instance—I think only one—in which our Lord brings in the analogy of the human fatherhood, and founds an argument upon it,



*a fortiori* (Matt. vii. 9-11 ; Luke xi. 11-13), "What man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Of course, it is a fair and valid analogy, especially if we hold that human fatherhood is meant to be a shadow or representation of the Divine. Let it be observed, however,—first, that the analogy is employed only for a very specific and limited purpose,—and, secondly, that the employment of it is quite consistent with the very highest view of God's fatherhood of his people. Nay, the higher the view taken of that fatherhood, so much the stronger is the *a fortiori* reasoning. And surely it is not a little remarkable that while the Lord is always, as it would seem, seeking to familiarise the minds of his disciples with the idea of God being their Father, he makes so little use of the human analogy. It looks almost as if he studiously avoided it ; as if he would have them to form their conceptions of what it is to have God for their Father, not from what they might see in any human household, but from what they saw of himself as a member of the divine.

For, let it be remembered, they were continually hearing his filial utterances and witnessing his filial walk. No doubt, the words that fell from his lips

were often such as they could not as yet fully understand—pointing to a higher condition than that which he now occupied, in which he had been as a Son with God as his Father. But yet again, on the other hand, they could not but perceive that in circumstances precisely similar to their own, and under the pressure of an experience which might any day be theirs, he still habitually looked up to God as his Father. Nor did he ever give them the slightest intimation of his looking up to God as his Father on these occasions, any otherwise than as he taught them, on the like occasions, to look up to God as their Father. They could not but observe in their Master's whole demeanour, in his everyday conduct, in all his sayings and doings, a very peculiar style of godliness;—new, unprecedented; giving evidence of a singularly close, intimate, warm, endearing sort of connection between God and him; showing him to be on terms of most confidential fellowship with God. They could not but know—he told them—that this sprang from his knowing God to be his Father, and feeling himself to be God's Son; that it was what this fatherhood and sonship meant and implied. But this very manner of living with God, as they were constantly instructed, it was their duty to aim at and realise. And they were instructed, with a view to it, to call God their Father. Would it naturally enter into their minds to suppose that this language denoted a different relation in their case from what it did in his?—that, while

they were expected to walk with God, in that wonderful way of holy familiarity and loving trust in which they saw him walking with God, they were to be placed in a less favourable position for doing so?—that God was not to be their Father as he was his, though they were expected to be like him, and to live like him, as sons? Surely the opposite of all this is rather the conclusion fairly to be drawn, unless some very clear intimation has been given to the contrary.

Much stress is often laid, as if it were such an intimation, on the fact, that whereas our Lord very often speaks of God with reference to himself as his Father, and with reference to his disciples as their Father, he avoids intentionally, as it would seem, and of set purpose, the use of the expression “Our Father.” To this remark there is only one exception, the invocation of the Lord’s Prayer; and it is thought that this is one of the instances in which the exception confirms and strengthens the rule. Christ, in putting the very words of filial prayer into the mouths of his disciples, must necessarily use the first personal pronoun, to denote God as the Father of the person praying; and as he intends the prayer, even when most personal and secret, to be still most catholic and loving, he uses, because he cannot help it, the plural—“Our Father.” But he does not, it seems, mean to include himself. For, it is said, he is giving a form of prayer to be offered by the disciples, either jointly or severally, by themselves—not by him and them

together. I confess I have always felt a difficulty in taking in this notion. It does not seem to me to be a natural explanation. I can scarcely think that it would have occurred to one of the disciples using this prayer, say on the very day on which it was given, to associate with himself in his mind and heart his fellow-disciples, and to exclude the Master. This would seem to imply that our Lord's prayers, even when he was among his disciples, were always exclusively intercessory—not praying with them, but only praying for them; that this was known to be his standing rule and order; and that the disciples were accordingly instructed—not only never to pray for him—but never to embrace him, though they might embrace all others, in the loving fellowship of prayer. For surely otherwise, apart from these suppositions, in saying, as he taught them to say, “Our Father,” the impulse, the instinct, of affection would lead them to have him as well as one another comprehended in the communion which the plural form “our” implies. But I cannot reconcile myself to such suppositions as I have indicated. I cannot imagine Jesus and the apostles living for years together, sitting together at meals, walking together by the way, and yet not praying together.\*

\* I do not attach importance to this view of the Lord's Prayer as bearing on my argument, though I confess I have some value for it. I am unwilling to believe that the Master gave to his disciples a form of prayer in which they must be dissociated from him; all



But though in this one instance Jesus uses the words "Our Father," it cannot be denied that his otherwise invariable practice, in referring to the fatherhood of God, is to speak of himself and of his disciples separately. And it is argued that this indicates a deliberate design to separate his sonship from theirs, and to represent it as being of a different sort—as being, in fact, a different relation. I am not at all satisfied that it does. I think the practice admits of

the more, because there is nothing expressive of his mediation in the prayer, not a hint of his standing apart from his disciples as their mediator, and bidding them use this form of supplication in his name. There is no occasion for that, if he means to join himself with them, and join them with himself, in the prayer which he dictates. In that case all is clear. For mediation is really identification. Jesus prays with us when he prays for us ; it is as praying with us that he prays for us. I shrink from the idea of his being my mediator with the Father, and interceding with the Father on my behalf, if it means that his intercessory prayer for me, and the prayer he teaches me, are so distinct that I cannot join with him in his, and that he cannot join with me in mine. I own I do not see how, on that supposition, we can have any other sort of mediation and intercession than that which heathenism and Romanism agree in holding. Nor do I see the least force in the argument that the closing petitions are such as a sinless person could not offer. That is true if the sinless person has not consented to make common cause, out and out, with a sinful and guilty race. If he has consented to do that, I do not see how he can refrain from the use of language proper to their sinful and guilty state. Does he not use such language in the Psalms (xxxviii. 4, xl. 12, etc.) ? Does he not use it on the cross (Mark xv. 34) ? The objection seems to me to strike at the root of the true evangelical doctrine of identification and substitution. But really, after all, whether the "our" in the Preface of the

another explanation, and one that may bring out, in a fresh and important point of view, the bearing of our Lord's work of propitiation for us, in our state of guilt, on our being admitted into participation with him, in his state of sonship.

I must premise, however, that, even apart from that explanation which I am about to offer, I do not consider the phenomenon we are now dealing with as very unaccountable, if we keep in mind the position of our Lord and his disciples as master and scholars.

Lord's Prayer be inclusive or exclusive of the Lord himself, my reasoning is not touched. I deprecate, however, the line of argument sometimes employed to prove his exclusion, because it seems to me to savour of a mode of thought that would dissociate the Son from those to whom he is to be "the first-born among many brethren," and would place him on a different platform altogether; a platform inconsistent, I think, not only with the idea of his drawing them up to his own level, but even still more with the idea of his doing so through the medium of his descending to theirs. In this connection, I may be allowed to ask a pertinent question. In his ordinary meals with his chosen disciples—not to speak of morning and evening family devotion—did our Lord say grace or ask a blessing? Surely that was common prayer, as between himself and them. Did he, on such occasions, studiously ignore or suppress his sonship? I cannot think so. I cannot but think, on the contrary, that he must have been all along, in all his private intercourse with them, and especially in what was of a directly devotional character, accustoming them to that kind of joint supplication,—implying both mediation and identification,—of which the form of prayer "commonly called the Lord's Prayer" gives, and is meant to give, the authoritative example.

This subject is again taken up for reconsideration in supplementary volume.

It is quite natural for a master addressing his scholars, for the most part magisterially, though with all affection, so to express himself as to maintain a certain distance and distinction between him and them ; and, in alluding to a third party to whom he and they stand similarly related, still to let it appear that the relation primarily belongs to him as the master, and to them only in a secondary sense, or by a secondary and subordinate right, as his scholars. This end is secured by the manner of speaking on the subject which Christ adopts ; nor does any occasion occur calling for a deviation, except when he is giving them a form of prayer. Then, however, as I cannot but think, he does not scruple to employ phraseology which the disciples could scarcely understand otherwise than as conveying the idea of their master and themselves being alike, and in the same sense, entitled to call God Father.

But I proceed to the other explanation. I think I can see a reason for there being still some reserve, even though the incarnation has been effected, in regard to the discovery of God's fatherhood and his people's sonship. Even the incarnate Son is not yet in a position to do full justice to the subject. He cannot yet unfold fully the substantial identity of the relation in which he and the disciples stand to God as Father—not at least in its highest and fullest significance.

Let me try to bring out what I mean by referring

again to the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians formerly quoted : “ When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ” (iv. 4, 5). It is there intimated that God sends forth his Son that we may receive the adoption of sons ;—surely after the model of the sonship of him who is sent forth. But while this is the design of its being his Son whom God sends forth, an indispensable preliminary to our receiving the adoption of sons in him is his “ redeeming us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us ” (iii. 13) ;—for so, a little before, the apostle has given in full what he expresses more elliptically now. Hence, it would seem that until his work of redemption is complete, the way for our entering into his sonship is not fully opened up. In order to his making us partakers of his relation to God as the Son, he must make himself partaker of our relation to God as subjects under the law. And not only so. He must redeem us from the guilt and condemnation which, in that relation, we have incurred, and under which we lie helpless. That he has not done till his life on earth is ended. All the time he is on earth he is about the doing of it. But it is only on the cross that he can say—“ It is finished.” It is only “ by his resurrection from the dead,” as Paul elsewhere says (Rom. i. 4), that he is “ declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the



spirit of holiness." And it is only then,—then, and not before,—that he is in a position to make the entire benefit and blessedness of his sonship available in behalf of his disciples, as admitted to be sharers with him in it. Until then, he is justified in not fully or in express terms bringing out all that is implied in his sonship being the model of theirs,—its being, in fact, up to the measure of their new capacity and his redeeming grace, truly and actually communicated to them.

This idea is confirmed when we turn to a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 11), where it is said that, upon certain grounds or considerations there stated, Christ is "not ashamed to call us brethren." The meaning is, not that he might be ashamed of us, but that, were it not for these grounds and considerations, he might be ashamed of himself. It is the same meaning that is suggested when it is said of God (xi. 16) that he is not ashamed to be called the God of the patriarchs, "for he hath prepared for them a city." Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, as he might well be if his doing so were a mere lip-compliment or figure of speech, and nothing more. He has no reason to be thus ashamed, because his calling us brethren involves, not a mere nominal title of courtesy, but a real and actual participation with him in his relation to the Father, and in its fruits, so far as the nature he shares with us allows. Passages are cited from the Old Testament to prove that Christ

has no cause to be ashamed, in the sense now explained, to call his disciples brethren.

The first and chief of these is from that twenty-second Psalm which so wonderfully brings out, in its beginning, the suffering, and in its close, the triumphant, Messiah. The verse quoted is the point of transition from the one estate to the other—from Christ suffering to Christ triumphant. It is then that he says—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Now that all my agony in redeeming them is over—and the psalm describes the agony to the life, or rather to the death—now I may without reserve call them brethren. I need not be ashamed of doing so. For I can now worthily and effectually declare to them thy name, as magnified in my obedience unto the death for them, and in their being admitted, on the footing of that obedience, to be my brethren;—my brethren, as having the same standing in the Father's house that I have, and the same warm place in the Father's heart.\*

It is in the light of this idea that I think we must view the message sent by the risen Lord to his disciples—"Go to my brethren" (John xx. 17). It is the first time he calls his disciples, in unequivocal terms, his brethren. He might have been ashamed to do so before; but he is not ashamed to do so now. Before, his calling them his brethren might only have implied that he made common cause with them;

\* See Appendix III. for a full exposition of the whole passage.

that he took his place among them; that he became one of them, so as to share all their liabilities and responsibilities. His incarnation was sufficient evidence of that. But it was evidence of nothing more than that. For anything that appeared, he might have thus identified himself with them, with no benefit to them, but only with damage to himself; sharing their fate, and so far sympathising with them; but not effecting their deliverance. While that state of things lasted, he might be ashamed to call them brethren. But when that is over, and it is seen that he has not merely partaken with them in their miserable state, but accomplished their redemption out of it, then emphatically he is not ashamed to call them his brethren;—there need be no more reserve as to his doing so. Then he is in a position to deal with them as out-and-out one with himself—his brethren—having the same position that he has in the Father's family, and the same interest in the family inheritance.

I cannot but interpret the message to the disciples after the resurrection in accordance with this view. It is, as I have said, now for the first time that he adopts unequivocally this phraseology, and calls his disciples, without qualification or explanation, his brethren. He never called them his brethren before. He did unquestionably keep up a certain distinction between himself and them. He was not able thoroughly to bring out his identifying of them

with himself in his sonship, until he had proved his identifying of himself with them in their subjectship to be really, for them, complete redemption from its curse. But now even this reserve is over. He can say, "My brethren," with fullest, clearest, warmest welcome—welcoming them into his own very relation of sonship and subjectship combined—"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

I own I shrink from any exposition of this message of love, sent through that loving woman to the lonely eleven, which would make it suggestive of separation or distinction. It was not an occasion for reminding the disciples that he and they stood in different relations to God—relations nominally the same, yet really different. But it was an occasion for assuring them that he and they stood in the same relation, and that he was now in a position to assure them of this;—now that he had expiated their guilt and made their peace with heaven. Why should the risen Lord seize on that opportunity for discriminating between his sonship and theirs,—and it must be added, for they go together, between his subjectship and theirs,—in a way that he never thought of before? It was a strange time to take for that—a strange place—a strange medium. No! It is, I am confident, not distinction but identification that he means when he says—"Tell my brethren that I



ascend unto my Father and their Father, and to my God and their God.”\*

I am aware that the views which I have been submitting as to the relation of fatherhood and sonship being the same in the case of Christ's disciples that it is in that of Christ himself, may seem startling to some minds. I may appear to them to be going, not only against certain modern speculations, but also against the opinions of the early fathers, which are perhaps, on this point, entitled to more weight. I think it right to offer a very few observations to show that the difference may after all be more apparent than real.

1. The Ante-Nicene divines were in the very thick and heat of the Arian and Semi-Arian controversies. Their whole energies were directed and devoted to the object of maintaining that Christ is the Son of God, not merely in virtue of some priority or precedence belonging to him in the order of creation; nor even in virtue of his being Creator or an active agent in creation; but in virtue of his being himself uncreated, and of the same substance with the Father from everlasting. Hence, they laboured anxiously to prove that he is represented in Scripture as being the Son of God in a sense and manner in which that title is never given to any other being in all the universe. Of course, they had no difficulty in proving this. They could show that neither the sonship sup-

\* See farther remarks on this in supplementary volume.

posed to belong originally to angels and men by creation, nor any sonship conferred on angels or men as the reward of obedience or the fruit of faith, could be held as coming up to what Holy Scripture says of the sonship of Christ. This they did with an ability and success which none but God could give. And God has blessed what they thus did, for the peace of the Church catholic, on that article at least, down to our own time.

It need not be counted strange, however, that having their minds so intently bent upon bringing out that feature in Christ's sonship which could not be shared with any creature, or be common to him with any other intelligence—its being natural and necessary from everlasting, in respect of his being the only-begotten and eternal Son—they may have been led, perhaps, to isolate him in his sonship rather too much ; and so to exaggerate or misapprehend somewhat the difference between his sonship and that of his believing disciples.

2. In particular, I cannot help suspecting—for I confess my imperfect knowledge and dare not speak confidently—that they may not have had sufficiently before them the distinction between the two questions which I have been attempting to keep separate ; —the first having reference to the nature or character of the relation in itself, and the second having reference to the date and manner of its being constituted. Their argument against the Arians and Semi-Arians

is conclusive, if it is made out from Scripture, as it clearly can be made out, that the sonship of Christ has a different origin, and rests fundamentally on a different ground, from any relation of sonship competent to any other person ;—its origin, if we may speak of the origin of what has no beginning, being in the everlasting nature of the Godhead, and its ground being eternal generation. That is enough for their purpose. It is not necessary to hold that the relation itself, as regards all that is vital and essential in its reciprocal claims and endearments, may not be shared by Christ with his worshippers among the angels and his believing people among men.

3. I believe that this community for which I plead is really and truly, to all practical intents and purposes, admitted by the writers to whom I am referring. I am persuaded that they did virtually hold the filial relation of believers to God to be so closely connected with Christ's that it might be reckoned substantially the same. "For this cause is the Word man, and he who is Son of God was made Son of man, that man, receiving the Word and accepting adoption, might become the Son of God." \*

Before closing this lecture, I wish to advert again to the topic on which I touched at the beginning. I referred then to the discrimination which our Lord

\* Irenæus *apud* Treffrey, page 434. See also supplementary volume.

manifested in speaking of God's fatherhood with reference to men. He reveals God as sustaining this relation to his disciples, and to them alone. God is their Father, not the Father of mankind generally. I find no trace whatever, in all our Lord's teaching, of anything like a universal fatherhood. The Son reveals the Father, not as the Father of sinners of mankind generally, but as the Father exclusively of those who receive the Son, and believe on his name.

At the same time, it is to be observed that the fact of his revealing God at all as the Father, has a very gracious aspect towards sinners of mankind generally. God would be the Father of them all if they would but consent to have it so. He would have them all to be his children. His relents, his longings, his appeals, are prompted by a love that does really partake of the paternal character. It is of a Father's pity, a Father's love, a Father's open house, a Father's open heart, that the Son has to speak, when he pleads with those whom, however guilty and degraded, he regards with an affection that is truly that of a brother.

It is this consideration that makes the matchless parable of the prodigal son so appropriate as well as so affecting.

Some, indeed, are disposed to found an argument on that parable in support of their favourite opinion that men, even in their unconverted state, may look



on God as already their Father ; and that in reality what they need, and all that they need, is not to become sons of God, but only to become alive to the fact that they are his sons already, and have always been so. But,—not to speak of the danger of drawing doctrinal conclusions from the minute and incidental details of illustrative narrations or stories,—I cannot help thinking that those who would make such a use of this most beautiful of all the parables grievously pervert its meaning, and altogether miss its spirit and scope. I hold them to be guilty of bad taste, as well as of bad criticism and bad theology.

Let it be conceded that the prodigal represents sinners generally, the sinners with whom our Lord was accused of being too familiar. The parable is his defence against that accusation, and nothing more. And what is his defence? Virtually it is this :—He is the elder brother in the Father's house. He puts it to his accusers to say whether he best sustains the character and does the part of the elder brother, by acting as he is wont to act, in the way that seems to them so objectionable, or by behaving, as they would have him behave, like the elder brother in the parable.

In doing this, the Lord, as the Son, necessarily appeals to his Father's character, and wonderfully opens up to all the human family his Father's heart.

In my Father's eyes these sinners with whom you say I associate too freely, are not what they are in yours. You regard them as outcasts ;—He would have them to be sons. He looks upon them as lost children whom he would fain recover to himself. His purpose is that I, the Son of his love, should be "the first-born among many brethren." And it is among these sinners that I am to find my brethren. These sinners, each and all of them, my Father longs to embrace, as any Father worthy of the name would embrace a long-estranged child coming back to him again. He has sent me to seek and save them ;—to reveal him to them as a Father waiting to welcome them as sons. How think ye? Do I best carry out my Father's purpose by treating them after the manner you would have me treat them,—as the offscouring of the earth,—or by treating them as my Father's children and my brethren?—so treating them all, including the very worst and vilest of them,—even those who have sunk almost to the level of the hungry wallowing swine?

Surely that is the point of the parable, viewed in the light of its occasion. And that is really its only meaning. It turns wholly on the love with which God regards lost sinners, and his willingness to have them reconciled to himself. It does not turn at all on the precise nature either of their present relation to him, or of any previous relation in which they may have stood to him. Thus viewed, the parable is very

precious. It warrants the widest and most unrestricted proclamation of the fatherhood of God as now, in his Son, brought within the reach of all,—to be pressed on the acceptance of all,—with the strongest possible assurance that all are welcome, freely welcome, to have the full enjoyment of all that is implied in it, if they will,—when they will.

But what is it that is thus brought within the reach of all and pressed upon the acceptance of all? Let that be kept ever in view, for it enhances a thousandfold the grace of the whole arrangement. For it is not merely in the universality and freeness of the offer, but even still more in the value of what is offered, that the great benevolence of the Father is seen. He would have all men to be sons as Jesus is his son. Jesus would have all men to be his brethren—to be to him what those are on whose behalf, in the view of their perfected oneness with himself in his sonship, he offers his wonderful intercessory prayer—“That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” In what sense one? Let himself reply—“The glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” And for what end? “That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” Let this identification be specially noted ;

—“Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”  
Can it be explained away? I think not. For mark what follows:—“I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John xvii. 21-26).



## LECTURE FIFTH.

THE MANNER OF ENTRANCE INTO THE RELATION ; ADOPTION AS CONNECTED WITH REGENERATION AND JUSTIFICATION.

“ But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—JOHN i. 12, 13.

THE manner of entrance into any relation must correspond to the nature and character of the relation, and must be in harmony and in keeping with it. If it is a relation of hired service of any sort, the way into it is through a properly adjusted bargain or mutual agreement. If it is such a relation as that of marriage, it is reached through consent on both sides sufficiently intimated and certified. If it is right standing in the eye of law, after being charged with crime, the only proper access is through a legal and judicial sentence of acquittal. If it is restoration to friendship and friendly intercourse, where misunderstanding and estrangement have prevailed, the healing of the breach, through explanation given and accepted, is the obvious method of reconciliation.

The same rule or principle must apply to the relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and his people. According to what the relation itself is, so must the mode of entrance into it be.

I have been pleading for the identity of the relation, as common to the Son and to those who are his. I have admitted, no doubt, these two qualifications :—first, that he has filial consciousnesses and experiences in the past eternity which they cannot have ; and secondly, that their power of apprehending and appreciating all that the relation involves must be immeasurably less than his. This last qualification, I would say in passing, must be a continually decreasing one, as the years roll on of the eternity that is to come. For all along the line of its endless ages, they will be “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” They will be growing in their acquaintance with him as the Son ; and in their understanding of his manner of existence as the Son with the Father from everlasting. With these qualifications, however, I have been maintaining that the relation is the same ; that it is in their case substantially identical with what it is in his.

How, then, are we to explain their admission into this relation ? Is there not a serious difficulty here ? Assuredly there is ; and it is a twofold difficulty. It may be put both as a natural, and as a relational difficulty—if I may be allowed to use such a phrase. It may be viewed either in the light of man’s inward

nature as a fallen being, or in the light of his outward legal standing as a guilty subject.

I. I begin with the consideration of the difficulty viewed as natural. How is man, as a fallen being, to become capable of sonship?

Here, however, I must, by way of preliminary remark, ask attention to the original and eternal filiation of the Second Person in the Trinity. For, in connection with my present subject, I cannot help thinking that there is something rather remarkable in the representation which Scripture gives of our Lord's sonship, and of the ground on which it originally rests. His entrance into this relation had no beginning; and therefore to speak of the manner of his entrance into it would be obviously unwarrantable. According to strict propriety of speech, he never entered into it all. It has been his from everlasting. And yet his eternal relation is represented as resting from everlasting on his being begotten. Mysterious, incomprehensible, generation lies at the root of it. He is the only-begotten Son of God; "begotten, not made;" and begotten from everlasting (John i. 14, 18; iii. 16, 18; 1 John iv. 9, etc.)

This is unquestionably analogical language;—it is speaking of God after the manner of men. It is the setting forth of the original foundation of an eternal divine relation, and an eternal distinction of related divine persons in the Godhead, under the analogy of an act or event in human history and ex-

perience, having its date, of course, in time. This is strange. And it is all the more so, if I am right in my opinion that, as regards the nature and character of God's paternal relation to his people, there is in Scripture,—especially in our Lord's teaching,—a studied avoiding of the human analogy ; indicating a desire on his part that his disciples should learn to conceive of their sonship, not analogically at all, but by direct knowledge and insight ;—or, in other words, that they should be led to apprehend their sonship, —not merely as a relation similar to sonship in a human family,—nor even as a relation similar to his own sonship in the divine family,—but as substantially the same relation. In that view, I think the use of the human analogy to describe or indicate the original constitution of the relation in the person of the Son, must be felt to be not a little noticeable and significant. As to the question—what the relation is?—the human analogy is dispensed with, or rather designedly shunned. As to the question—how it subsists from the beginning?—the human analogy is the chosen medium of revelation.

For, one would say, the human analogy is in this latter case even more inadequate than in the former. The use of it, we might suppose, must be apt to mislead, or to be a stumbling-block. Indeed, it has misled and proved a stumbling-block to not a few ;—the phrase, “only-begotten” or “first-begotten,” being in their view irreconcilable with the doctrine of our



Lord's supreme divinity, or his being the coequal, coeternal, consubstantial Son of the everlasting Father.

With all its imperfection, however,—when due allowance is made for the necessary defectiveness of every earthly similitude of what is heavenly,—this human analogy serves a most important purpose. It brings out, for one thing, the idea of entire sameness of nature. The begotten son of a divine father must be himself essentially divine,—just as the begotten son of a human father is himself essentially human. The Son of God must himself be as really God, as a man's son is himself man. Thus the analogy, though it is a human analogy, does not degrade or obscure the divine and eternal sonship of our Lord. It rather illustrates and magnifies it.

Reflexly, also, this use of the term “begotten” may shed light on the sonship of our Lord's disciples, and the manner of its constitution. It now becomes, with reference to that subject, a divine analogy. It is, as it were, taken up into heaven. It is there appropriated, in a very wonderful way, to the relation of fatherhood and sonship subsisting from everlasting between the eternal Father and his beloved Son. From thence it may be brought to earth again. And, being thus sanctified and elevated, it may be applied in illustration of the relation of fatherhood and sonship, as it is formed in time, between the eternal Father and the brethren of his Son.

Here, however, it might seem that the entire and utter inadequacy—not so much of the analogy to what is to be illustrated as of what is to be illustrated to the analogy—must absolutely preclude the use of the analogy, as in its very nature unsuitable and unsafe. There is, undoubtedly, in such matters, the utmost need of caution. But I do not think that I go too far when I suggest this thought. The employment of the phraseology of earth,—and of such phraseology,—to denote the original ground of the heavenly relation, may be merely an instance of gracious condescension on the part of God. But to my apprehension, it rather looks like a plan purposely intended to familiarise the minds of our Lord's disciples with the idea of his sonship being of such a sort that they can share in it.

The soundest of the fathers, those most strenuous in maintaining the Son's supreme divinity—his being uncreated and of one substance with the Father—his absolute and unqualified equality, in respect of nature, with the Father—were accustomed at the same time to allow, or rather to assert, a certain mysterious distinction, in virtue of which the Second Person in the Godhead has from everlasting been in some sense subordinate to the First, as the Third has been to the First and the Second. And though some modern writers have demurred to the opinion, thinking it inconsistent with a full belief of the Trinity, I still incline on the whole to side with

Bull, Pearson, and Horsley on this question, if it really is a question, rather than with them.\*

Let it be noted that it is a relational distinction exclusively that is contended for, such as fits into what is written of the Father sending and the Son being sent; the Father giving and the Son being given; the Father begetting and the Son being begotten. And surely these last cor-relatives—begetting and being begotten—are fitted, may I not say intended, to facilitate somewhat the conception of the relation which they indicate being such as we may have communicated to us. Not only is it a relation having its analogical representation in the natural human fatherhood and sonship; it is even capable of really and actually moulding into conformity with itself the spiritual fatherhood and sonship which is constituted by grace. Whatever these expressions imply—in the line of relational priority in the Father and relational subordination in the Son—tends to harmonise sonship with creatureship. They go far to establish a presumption *à priori* that, whether in Christ or in his disciples, the relations may not be incompatible. It may thus appear how, in virtue of the grace by which he who is the only-begotten Son becomes a subject—they who are originally subjects may be, in a real and vital sense, “begotten,” or born again, as sons.

\* See supplementary volume.

For it is the manner in which the two relations are combined that is here again the main question ; and in considering it, the incarnation must once more be the guiding fact.

What is it that constitutes Jesus, in and from his human birth, the Son of God ? Or, otherwise, and more properly shaping the inquiry,—what is it about his human birth that prevents it, if one may say so, from clashing with his sonship, and secures that on the contrary his sonship shall continue identically the same, notwithstanding his change of state ? Is it not the agency of the Holy Ghost in the production of his holy human nature ?

The angel's annunciation to the Virgin Mary seems certainly to imply this at all events,—that if her son had taken human nature as it is in fallen creatures ; if he had been born after the ordinary manner of men ; divine sonship could not have been ascribed to him in his condition of creatureship as man.\* Any such supposition, however, carries in its bosom an intolerable, and all but inconceivable, contradiction. It would make Christ—who, though uniting in himself the two natures, continues to be one person—the Father's Son in one of the two natures, and not the Father's Son in the other. But

\* “The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God ” (Luke i. 35).



this, as we have seen, is a plain and palpable inconsistency ; sonship being not a relation of the nature or natures to God, but a relation of the person. Hence the necessity of Christ becoming man in such a way as to secure that there shall be nothing in his manhood incompatible with continued sonship ; or, in other words, with his being still the Son of God in his one undivided person, whole and entire. His being born through the operation of the Holy Ghost secures that. For it secures to him the possession of a human nature such as, from the very first moment of its existence, is capable of sharing in the filial relation with the divine nature ;—a body, soul, spirit, such as the Son of God may worthily take into personal union with himself, continuing still to be the Son.

Some may think at first sight—and the objection has been seriously urged—that this makes the Holy Ghost the father of our Lord's humanity, in respect of his being the agent in its production. But it is not so. There cannot be a father of a nature, but only of a person. Our Lord's human nature never had any proper personality of its own. It was assumed by him into his personality as the Son. What the Holy Ghost had to do was to provide that it should be such as the Son might or could assume without derogation from his sonship.

Now, if it was necessary that the Holy Ghost should thus fashion and mould the human nature of

Christ,—in order to its being such as might not detract from, but rather harmonise with, and even adorn, the relation of sonship in which he stands from all eternity to the Father,—much more are the good offices of the same gracious Spirit needed for human nature as it is in us, if we are to have a share in that relation.

And here the task might well seem to be more difficult,—the problem harder to be worked out. In his case it was simply a birth that the Holy Spirit had to effect; in ours it is a new birth. For him, he had to provide a manhood such as the Son of God might wear, by what might be regarded as equivalent to an act of creative energy, or the utterance of the creative fiat. In us he finds manhood so marred and corrupted that it requires to be, in a sense, unmade that it may be made over again anew. Nor is this unmaking and remaking a simple process. It demands the application of some power or specific that shall avail to obliterate the stains of guilt,—to break up entirely the whole of the old inner man,—to root out the seed of Satanic insubordination which is native and indigenous, and implant the seed of God, whence a new life of willing and obedient subjectship, compatible with highest and holiest sonship, may consistently spring.

That is the work of the Spirit in regeneration. Is it not a work corresponding closely to his agency in the human birth of Christ? He generated Christ's

humanity that he might continue to be the Son. He regenerates our humanity that we may become sons. To be "born of the Spirit" may thus, I think, be shown to be, as far as the human nature and human state are concerned, an indispensable preliminary condition of that nature and that state being reconcilable with sonship.

II. But it is not enough to make out a capacity of sonship, or a fitness for sonship, in the human nature of the Son as generated—and in that of his disciples as regenerated—by the Holy Ghost. There must be an express act of the Father declaring or constituting the relation. For the possibility of any of the fallen race of man being righteously owned and acknowledged as sons might well be called in question. Even if, subjectively, an inward renewal and regeneration of their natures might be effected, would that suffice for so righting, objectively, their standing in God's sight as to ensure legitimately and righteously their sonship? Nay,—more. When the eternal Son became one of the human family,—even under the guarantee of his not being himself personally involved in their natural pollution and criminality,—was it quite obvious beforehand that this could take place without the sacrifice or compromise—or, to say the least, the keeping in abeyance—of his sonship? There must be as regards both—as regards both Christ and his people—an authoritative and official procedure, as it were, on the part of the

Father;—declaring the continuance of the relation and its fuller development in his case; constituting the relation in theirs. For him, it is the announcement of the voice from heaven at his baptism, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” For them, it is the act of free and gracious adoption.

I connect the two. And yet there is a vast difference. The voice from heaven recognises sonship already subsisting—having subsisted from all eternity, and continuing to subsist still unchanged, though by his assuming human nature the Son has become a creature and a subject. The act of adoption on the other hand confers sonship of new, *de novo*, on those who are originally nothing more than creatures and subjects. It assumes a newborn capacity of receiving sonship. But it does not assume, it constitutes, the sonship itself. It is a pure and simple act of the free grace of God.

Notwithstanding this difference, however, there is one particular in respect of which the declared or recognised Son, and the adopted sons, are on the same footing. In the case of both alike there is required, as a preliminary to the manifestation of the relation of sonship in all its glory and blessed joy, a full and final clearing up and settlement of whatever may be doubtful, or whatever may be wrong, in the relation of subjectship.

The Son himself, after his coming in the flesh, was not declared to be “the Son of God with power”



till "his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). Up till that time, he had to meet and contend with the liabilities which he had undertaken as "made under the law;"—made under it when it had been broken by us, and needed to be magnified and honoured at a terrible cost by him. He is "crucified through weakness;" and only thus is it true that "he liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor. xii. 4). He must first be himself justified, through his fulfilling all the righteousness which he became bound on our account to fulfil, and expiating all the guilt which he consented on our account to answer for. His sonship, now that it has become associated with subjectship—in the broken and disordered state to which we—in whose nature he becomes a subject—have reduced this last relationship—cannot be set free, as it were, and made thoroughly available, as a source of power, otherwise than by this preliminary procedure of law.

When the case is that of creatures and subjects who are to be raised to the position of sons, a similar preliminary procedure of law would seem to be, *a fortiori*, indispensable.

I think it must be held to have been so, even when angels were the parties. If I am right in believing that these high and pure intelligences were not sons originally, in virtue of their creation or their innocence, but became sons by a sovereign act of grace on the part of God—that act, I cannot doubt, must have followed the trial of their obedience. If

so, it must have been preceded by what to them would be substantially equivalent to a sentence of justification. For the trial, whatever it was, to which they were subjected was really a trial under law, and in terms of law. It turned upon their willingness to acknowledge and submit to the moral government of God, as ruling them by law and judgment. That was what was put to the test. When their companions sinned and were condemned, they through grace stood the test and were acquitted ; they were accepted as righteous ; in a word, they were justified. Their probation being well over, they are judicially, and as if it were by the sentence of a court, declared to be not merely innocent and upright creatures, but obedient subjects who have kept the commandment, and are on that account entitled to life. Then, as I conceive, and not before, they are in a condition to receive the adoption of sons. For there is no inward work of the regenerating Spirit needed in their case ; nor need the Son assume their nature to redeem them, before he can have them as his brethren. All that is required is an outward act of grace, the appropriate recompense and reward of the obedience by which they have made good their title to justification. The Son is presented to them by the Father ; and the Spirit, by whom they have been enabled to stand as subjects, ensures their willingness to accept the position of sons.

The case is, of course, greatly altered when it is

not holy angels but fallen men who are concerned. Still, allowance being made for difference of circumstances, the principle which rules it is essentially the same. Their relation to God as subjects must first be put upon a right and satisfactory footing before they can become sons.

This necessity has already been considered in its bearing on the redeeming work of Christ.\* I now advert to it again in connection with the gracious act of God conferring, and the gracious act of the believer appropriating, the benefit which immediately flows from Christ's redeeming work—the benefit of justification, as opening the way to the ulterior and higher benefit of adoption.

So long as men are in a state of guilt and condemnation under the righteous sentence of the law, they cannot be regarded as fit subjects for becoming the sons of God. Nor is the disqualification to be viewed as being merely of a vague and general sort;—as if the objection raised on the part of God might be something like the repugnance which a man of pure taste and refined manners would naturally feel to admitting coarse, low-minded, ill-bred vagrants to the familiarities and sanctities of his home. If that were all, the difficulty or scruple might be got over by a little patience and forbearance, a little tact, a little judicious treatment and prudent kindness. Were the person I had to deal with merely, in some

\* See remarks on Gal. iv. 1-6, in the preceding lecture.

such indefinite sense as that, offensive to me, a moderate expenditure of time and pains might amend the fault. But he is in the hands of justice. The law has a hold over him. He is tried, convicted, and condemned. He is an imprisoned criminal, either undergoing his sentence or awaiting the execution of it. That is the precise obstacle which, in the case of fallen man, must be got out of the way. And it is removed in his justification. Faith, uniting him to Christ, and making Christ and Christ's righteousness his, secures his being absolved from guilt and accounted righteous. He is now *rectus in curiâ*, a free subject, and therefore capable of sonship.

I have been endeavouring to trace and point out the nature of the connection which I hold to subsist between our becoming sons of God and our regeneration, on the one hand, with our justification on the other. It seems to me to be of some consequence to have that determined as clearly as possible ;—I mean not only the connection but the nature of it. I cannot help suspecting that loose and indefinite views here have led to our forming somewhat inadequate apprehensions of what the sonship of Christ's disciples really is. Neither our regeneration nor our justification constitutes our sonship ; neither of them is the formal ground or warrant of our being sons of God. That is to be found in God's free and sovereign act of grace alone ;—in his "giving us the power" or privi-



lege "to become the sons of God;" in his "calling us the sons of God," in his having "predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (John i. 12; 1 John iii. 1; Eph. i. 5). But both regeneration and justification have a material bearing on this act of God, and it is important to know as exactly as may be what that bearing is. Perhaps the tendency has been to separate adoption somewhat too much from regeneration on the one side, and on the other side to confound it somewhat too much with justification.

I. In the writings of John—I refer especially of course to his Gospel and First Epistle—the sonship, not only of Christ but of his disciples is more fully and affectingly brought out than in other parts of Scripture. It is John who sets before us most clearly and touchingly his master's filial manner of life. If we would obtain an insight into what Jesus as the Son is to the Father and the Father to him, we must ponder incessantly these books. Nor will one ponder them long, I am well persuaded, without coming to the conviction, based on countless minute touches of most pathetic tenderness, that Jesus meant to identify those whom the Father had given him with himself in his sonship. John does not say much of the manner of our entering into that relation; but what he does say appears to me to make it turn very much on regeneration.

Thus, in the outset of his Gospel (i. 12, 13), he connects very emphatically the statement concerning

“the Word,”—“that to as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,”—with this explanation,—“which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And immediately he goes on to say of “the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us, full of grace and truth,”—“We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.”

Here, in the first place, I cannot but conclude that John intends to represent the sonship of those who receive “the Word,” and believe on his name, as substantially the same relation with the sonship of “the Word” himself. It is not impossible, and not, I think, very improbable, that John may have been acquainted with what Paul had written—“We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. iii. 18). Had he that scripture in his mind when, speaking evidently of sonship, he says,—we beheld the glory of the sonship of the only begotten,—beheld it so as to be changed into the same image, into the very form and fashion of that glorious relation? Of course I do not attach any argumentative importance to this conjecture, although it may serve for an illustration. Apart from that altogether, there is enough, I think, in the passage which I have quoted, taken by itself, to support my first conclusion with regard to it.

My second conclusion is more material to my present purpose. It is drawn from the fact that John connects very pointedly and emphatically our "becoming sons of God" with our "being born of God." Does not this intimate that, while acknowledging the act of grace towards us in which God gives us the standing of sons, John means to represent our sonship as largely dependent also on the work of grace in us by which God gives us the nature of sons? "Power" or right "to become sons of God," secures the filial standing; "being born of God" secures the filial character or nature.

This last conclusion from these words in John's Gospel will commend itself with most peculiar force to those who are most intimately acquainted with his way of writing in his First Epistle. Turning to that book we find one passage especially in which the manner of our entering into the relation of sonship is noticed. Our being sons is ascribed to the calling of God (iii. 1):—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Of course there is no difficulty in understanding what is meant by our being called by the Father the sons of God. It is not a nominal but a real calling that is intended, the actual constituting of a real relation. But the statement seems to make sonship depend solely and exclusively on God's calling, that is, on his adoptive act. It is not so, however. This verse should not be separated

from the verse immediately preceding it (ii. 29), in which it is said that "every one that doeth righteousness is born of God." For it is plainly that thought, "being born of God," which suggests to John the burst of adoring gratitude, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." Thus, in point of fact, John rests that sonship, which is in his eyes so wonderful, mainly on our being born of God. Nor is this all. John, repeating the assertion, "we are the sons of God," continues to dwell with singular earnestness and explicitness on what being born of God means, and what it involves—perfect likeness to God hereafter (iii. 2); purity like Christ's now (3); having the seed of God remaining in us as the germ of an impeccable life (9). It is impossible, I think, to read that whole passage in the epistle with any care and thought, without coming to the conviction that John attaches a very deep meaning indeed to our being born of God; that he looks upon it as in some real and vital sense analogous—not merely to the relation of the human child to the human parent—but to the act in which the relation originates; that he regards it as actually effecting a certain community of nature between God and man.

Keeping all this in view, I can scarcely doubt that John's design is to represent our being sons of God as connected very closely with our regeneration; and connected, too, after the very same manner that



a man's being the son of his earthly parent is connected with his generation in time ;—or what I apprehend was more in John's mind, after the very same manner that the Lord's being the Son of his heavenly Father is connected with his generation from eternity. If so, then that makes sonship not merely a relation of adoption, but in a real and important sense a natural relation also. There must be adoption. But he who adopts regenerates. The regeneration is a real communication to us on his part of "his seed," of what makes our moral and spiritual nature the same in character as his ; perfectly so at last, and imperfectly, yet truly so, as far as it prevails, even now. And this regeneration makes the adoption real. The adopted sons are sons by nature, and that, too, in a very literal acceptance of the term.

These views may be of use as enabling us better to understand how the sonship of Christ and that of his people are and must be, in a very intimate sense, identical ; how it is one and the same relation for both. There are no more two sonships, one for them and another for him, than there are two sonships for him, one for his human nature and condition, and another for his divine. There is but one sonship for us both. It may well be so, if in us, as in him, it is a natural sonship.

Those who would make a distinction between the sonships, Christ's and ours, sometimes represent it as turning on the distinction between natural and adop-

tive sonship ;—Christ being the Father's son by nature, we being sons by adoption only. If the reference here is to the fact that whereas Christ is God's Son from the beginning, we have become God's sons only yesterday ;—his, in that view, being of the very essence of his existence, a necessity of his very being, while ours is nothing of the sort ;—the fact is of course admitted. I have attempted, however, formerly to show that it is not to the purpose in this argument. If anything more is meant, the distinction may now be seen to be without warrant. If we are the sons of God at all, we are, in virtue of our regeneration, his sons by nature as well as by adoption. The nature, as well as the standing, of the Son is ours.\*

I would only further add, on this part of my subject, that while John is our chief authority, it is not John alone who ascribes so high a signification to the change which the Holy Spirit effects in the new birth—making it imply the production of a certain community of nature between God and us. Peter speaks expressly of the children of God being “partakers of the divine nature”—(2 Ep. i. 4). Paul also, when he would reconcile us as sons to the chastening and corrective discipline of “the Father of spirits,”†

\* See my *Exposition* of 1 John, *in loco*.

† By this expression I may remark, by the way, the apostle means, I think, nothing more than to contrast the merely carnal, earthly, bodily character of the original tie which binds us to the

represents this as the design of our Father's faithful dealing with us, "that we might be partakers of his holiness"—(Heb. xii. 10). And again, when he announces the high rank to which, from everlasting, God has destined "them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose," he describes them as "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren"—(Rom. viii. 28, 29). Surely this is a strong assertion of their actual participation with the Son in his own very sonship. And it is made to rest on their being "conformed to his image;" or, in other words, on their community of nature with him. For though the Son's relation to the Father may be partly what is meant by "his image" here,—and the exact assimilation of our relation to the Father to his may consequently be partly what is meant by our being "conformed to his image,"—yet the phrase can scarcely be taken otherwise than as inclusive of sameness of nature as well as sameness of relation. Likeness or identity of nature is what makes likeness or identity of relation possible and conceivable. And it is that also which makes it capable of being realised in consciousness and experience; more and more so, as the conformity to the image of the Son of God grows more and more complete; until, in the

fathers of our flesh, with the spiritual and heavenly character of the relation in which we stand to him who is no mere "father of our flesh," but "the Father of spirits." See supplementary volume.

full and final "regeneration" of the resurrection (Mat. xix. 28),—the full and final "adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" (Rom. viii. 23),—long waited for, comes at last. Then is he indeed "the first-born among many brethren."

II. But if this relation of sonship, as shared by the Son with his disciples, has suffered from its close connection with regeneration not having been sufficiently recognised, it has suffered perhaps still more seriously from so many of our theologians having failed to recognise sufficiently its entire distinction and separation from justification. The two have, to a large extent, been confounded and mixed up together. What God does in the act of adoption has been so represented as to make it either a part of what he does in the act of justification, or a mere appendage and necessary corollary involved in that act. Turretine, for example (*Locus XVI., Quæstio*<sup>e</sup><sub>vi.</sub>), expressly and formally includes adoption in his exposition of justification. He makes adoption nothing more than another name for the positive element which all the reformed divines held to be embraced in justification. They all held that in the justification of any man there are these two things implied—the pardon of his sins and the acceptance of his person. He is on the one hand judicially, and in terms of law, absolved from guilt, from ill-desert, from just liability to punishment. And he is on the other hand—judicially also and in terms of law—



pronounced righteous. He is acknowledged as having fulfilled all incumbent obligations, in virtue of his oneness with him who has done so in his stead; and he is received into favour accordingly. Even the former of these two things held to be implied in our justification, goes far beyond the mere idea of the remission of the threatened and deserved punishment, which is all that mankind naturally care for; all that they really include in their favourite fancy of an universal fatherhood. It carries in it the removal, not merely of the penalty, but of the desert of the penalty. It is the taking away, not only of that to which our guilt justly exposes us and makes us liable, but of our guilt itself. It is a thorough absolution. And when the second of the two things held to be implied in our justification is taken into account—our being treated, not only as if we had never sinned, but as if we had fulfilled all righteousness—it may be seen how far God's manner of dealing with us when he justifies us goes beyond the manner of men. This will be all the more apparent when it is considered that, in virtue of our real union to Christ by faith, the whole is a real transaction. It is no mere fiction in law. The use of the phrase "as if," in describing it, though scarcely to be avoided, is unfortunate and improper. As made one with Christ personally, by the Spirit working in me appropriating and uniting faith, I am really and truly one with him in his absolution from my guilt which he took upon himself, and in his

being accepted as righteous on account of his "obedience unto death" for me.

I state thus as broadly and strongly as I can the great Reformation doctrine. For I would not lower justification in order to exalt adoption. On the contrary, the higher any one raises the privilege of justification, the better for my view; since I hold adoption to be a privilege higher still. It is the admission of a person thoroughly justified, as being really one with the Father's righteous Servant, to fellowship with him with whom he is one, in his higher position, as the Father's only-begotten and well-beloved Son. For that reason partly, I object to Turretine's identification of adoption with what may be described as the second or positive part of justification. But there is another objection to his view. It makes the act of God in adoption savour, as I think, too much of a legal and judicial procedure. I ask special attention to this consideration.

The more strictly we attach the character of a legal and judicial procedure to the act of God in justification, so much the better. It is only, I believe, in that way that we can really maintain the infinite distance that there should always be felt to be between God, the Creator, Ruler, Judge of all, and ourselves, who, as his creatures, are nothing more than his intelligent subjects. It is only in that way that we can uphold, in all its integrity, his government by law and judgment. We can scarcely, therefore, err

in the direction of viewing justification too forensically—casting it too strongly into the mould of what passes, or may be supposed to pass, in a court of law. Nor need that detract from the grace of the act, on the part of God. On the contrary, it is only when we recognise its strictly forensic character that the real grace of the act appears; and only in proportion as its strictly forensic character is practically apprehended and realised, will its real grace be felt. For in fact—strict law and judgment apart—Christ's work of redemption and God's act of justification founded upon it, so far from indicating grace, imply something like the opposite of grace. Strict law and judgment apart,—no reason can possibly be given for the interposition of the Son being required, with such suffering as it entailed on him, and for the Father's forgiveness being based on that interposition, which does not derogate from grace—which does not, in fact, impart to the whole transaction an ungracious aspect—as if God personally needed to be conciliated and appeased. It is only by adhering strictly to the legal and judicial character of the transaction—by viewing it as properly and literally forensic, both as regards God's treatment of Christ for us and as regards his treatment of us in Christ—that we can see and appreciate the grace that there is in our justification. Then, indeed, grace shines forth in it conspicuously—grace providing the substitute; grace accepting the substitute; grace making us one with

the substitute; grace receiving us and dealing with us as one with the substitute. Thus, to conserve its gracious character, it is indispensably necessary to hold firm and fast the forensic character of justification.

All the more, however, on that very account, it seems desirable to extricate adoption out of its entanglement with justification, and to recognise it as having a place and character of its own in God's manner of dealing with us; a place and character not in any proper sense forensic at all. No doubt the term adoption may be suggestive of legal procedure;—it is a term which occurs in law-books. In countries where the practice prevails it is commonly regulated by statute. It was so of old in the Roman commonwealth and empire; and it is probably the Roman usage that the New Testament writers have in view on the rare occasions—for they are comparatively rare—on which they thus designate the Christian sonship. Where adoption is allowed to affect civil and patrimonial rights, as it was held to do under the government of Rome, the parties must necessarily be required to appear before the judge, in order to have the transaction duly attested and recorded. I suppose that even in our own country, where this practice is not so expressly and formally recognised in law as it was at Rome, if I wished to adopt a strange child, to the effect of investing him with a legal right to maintenance and to the succession as my child, I



would be obliged to go through some legal form. Let it be observed, however, that there is the widest difference between that and a purely forensic procedure. The case is not submitted to a tribunal for decision, but only to a recorder for ascertainment and registration. No judicial sentence is asked for, or is competent. The adoption itself is altogether extrajudicial ; as much so as is the contracting of marriage ; though in both cases it may belong to the judge or magistrate to require that he shall be satisfied as to the good order of what is done, and the good faith of the parties doing it.

I think it is of as much consequence to maintain the thoroughly unforensic character of God's act in adopting, as it is to maintain the strictly forensic character of his act in justifying. All is legal and judicial in the latter act ; if it were not so, there would be no grace in it at all. Nothing is legal or judicial in the other ; if there were anything of that sort in it, all its grace would be gone. I look upon God as in adoption giving full and unrestrained vent to the pure fatherly love which he has for his own dear Son ; pouring it out upon him so lavishly that it overflows upon all that are his. There is nothing in his fatherhood or in his fatherly treatment of his Son that savours of the legal, the judicial, the forensic. There was once needed a very short and sharp dealing of that sort, on the Father's part, with the Son of his love, when he stood in our stead, as not only a subject but a criminal. That, however, is all

over now. As criminal for our crime he has paid the penalty ;—as subject on our behalf he has fulfilled the righteousness. No outstanding claim of justice can ever arrest the flow of his Father's fatherly love. Nor does it flow by any legal rule, or under any legal restriction or condition. It is simply fatherly love. And it is that very love of which our adoption, following upon our justification and associated with our regeneration, makes us, as his brethren, partakers.

There are, I think, two practical advantages connected with our keeping clear the distinction on which I have been insisting, between the forensic character of God's act in justifying us, and the unforensic character of his act in adopting us,—as well as of his treatment of us consequent upon his adopting us. To these I shall very briefly advert before I close the present lecture.

1. In the matter of our justification, we are accustomed to be very scrupulous in excluding everything on our part except faith alone. And it is carefully explained that faith is admitted as the means of our being justified, not because it has any merit, or virtue, or goodness in itself,—nor because it is the source of goodness, since it “worketh by love”—but only because it is the hand that accepts the benefit ; or rather because it is the heart that embraces him in whom the benefit resides. It unites us to Christ. In the matter of our adoption again, it is the very circum-

stance of its “working by love” that fits faith for being the appropriate organ or instrument. In fact one might almost put it thus—that love occupies somewhat of the same place with reference to adoption or sonship which faith occupies with reference to justification. It is in the exercise of mere and simple faith that we apprehend and realise our acceptance as righteous in the sight of God. It is in the exercise of faith working by love, or of the love by which faith works, that we apprehend and realise our loving fellowship with our heavenly Father as his sons.

This may be partly what the Lord means by these remarkable words, “At that day, ye shall ask in my name : and I say not that I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God”—(John xvi. 26, 27). The elder brother, having presented himself and those whom “he is not ashamed to call his brethren,” to their common father, saying—“Behold, I and the little ones whom thou hast given me,”—steps for a moment aside. He declines to be a mere negotiator between his father and the younger members of the family, as if there were still some distance or reserve. He insists on their using their full privilege of sonship, and making full proof of their Father’s heart ; tasting and seeing how he loves them for the love they bear to the Son ; the love which, in a sense, constitutes them sons themselves.\*

\* See this text expounded in Appendix v.

I am inclined to think that this view which I am attempting to explain of sonship as not a part of justification, nor a mere corollary from it, but a distinct and separate benefit,—differently conferred, at least in some respects, and differently apprehended and realised,—will be found to be of some practical importance. There is unquestionably, in certain quarters, a feeling of distaste and dislike apt to arise when God is represented as on the one hand dealing judicially with Christ standing in the room of his people, and then, on the other hand, dealing judicially with them in virtue of their being one with him by faith. The whole transaction in both its parts, in requiring from the surety satisfaction to law and justice, and in giving us the benefit of that satisfaction, appears to some to wear a harsh, technical, and legal aspect ; a sort of cold, business-like, court-of-justice air, which they cannot relish. It is not difficult to show that this is a prejudice, occasioned,—either by the rude and coarse way in which the doctrine is sometimes handled by unwise advocates and expounders of it,—or, which is the far more common case, by some gross caricature of it which the parties choose to draw or paint for themselves. At the same time,—if that is the only mode of God's dealing with Christ, and with those whom Christ answers for in the judgment, which is prominently brought forward and insisted upon,—there may undoubtedly be some risk of its degenerating into barren and dogmatic orthodoxy. It would



be a curious and interesting speculation to inquire whether we may not thus, to some extent at least, account for the lapse of the theology of the Reformation in the schools and colleges of the Continent, as well as among ourselves, first into rigid and frigid scholastic systematising, and then into rationalism. At all events, I am persuaded that we have a strong safeguard against any such danger, if we do full justice to the common sonship of Christ and of Christ's disciples ;—erecting it into a distinct and separate article of belief, and giving it a well-defined place of its own, “with ample room and verge enough,” among the truths of the Christian creed and the elements of Christian experience. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” Let that be fully taught.

2. My second observation is very much the converse of the former. The manner of treating this whole subject for which I have been pleading seems to me well fitted to erect a barrier against all Antinomian and Neonomian tendencies. The mixing up, in any way or in any measure, of God's dealing with us as sons in our adoption and his dealing with us as subjects in our forgiveness and acceptance, is apt to open the door for the notion, either of law, old strict law, being superseded, or of its being somehow modified. The idea of some sort of compromise between the paternal and the judicial in God's treatment of us, very readily suggests itself. And believers, once justified by faith, are either held to have nothing to do

with law at all, it being their privilege to act, not from a sense of legal obligation, but from the spontaneous prompting of affection ; or else they are held to be under some mysterious new form or fashion of law, partaking too often not a little of the character of license. There will be little room for such imaginations if the right balance and adjustment between our justification as subjects and our adoption as sons is maintained. For I need scarcely say that though they are to be distinguished, these two are not to be disjoined. We are not to conceive of them as successive states ; as if our state as justified subjects coming first gave place to our state as adopted sons following after. They are simultaneous states, to be realised continually as such. Love reigns in both. Love delighting in the holy and good law of the Ruler reigns in the one ; in the other, love rejoicing in the endearments of the Father. It is the very love which moved the Ruler's righteous servant, the Father's beloved Son, to say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart ;" "my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work ;" "I must be about my Father's business ;" "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?"

## LECTURE SIXTH.

### THE PRIVILEGES AND OBLIGATIONS OF SONSHIP.

“Now are we the sons of God.”—1 JOHN iii. 2.

THE relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and us,—if it is what I have ventured to represent it as being,—must involve in it privileges and obligations of a definite and distinctive character. For it is in itself a definite and distinctive relation. It is something more than the mere infusion of a certain measure of fatherly feeling, such as prevails in the homes of earth, into the ordinary moral administration of God ; to the effect of tempering the rigid and exact severity of strict justice, and qualifying judgment with mercy. It is something different, also, from the kindly and fatherly sort of feeling with which God, as ruler, may be supposed to regard his once rebellious subjects when they are returning to their allegiance. If either of these accounts is held to exhaust the idea of God's fatherhood, its practical bearing on our happiness and duty can be only very vaguely felt and described. A general notion of benignant graciousness on God's part, calling for

gratitude on our part, is nearly all that can be made of it, or got out of it.

It is true indeed that, as regards its actings and manifestations, this general notion of graciousness may be broken up, as it were, into details ; and the analogy of the human family may suggest a variety of particular instances. The subject is often treated in this way. God is represented as discharging many different offices towards his people, all of them expressive of an affection like that of a parent—such as putting upon them his name ; giving them access always into his presence ; pitying, protecting, and providing for them ; chastening and correcting them ; keeping them safe till they reach heaven at last. But in fact, and as regards their essential character, these may be all classed as benignant offices of government, and of government merely.

They all, however, stand out in a new light, and become far more clear, specific, and well-defined, when they are viewed in connection with the true and proper fatherhood of God, as distinguished from what I may be allowed to call the analogical. The more the special and peculiar nature of that relation is recognised, the more will these and other similar dealings of God be seen to be special and peculiar also. And if there should turn out to be any one speciality or peculiarity attaching to the position of sonship in the creature, as constituted by participa-



tion in the sonship of the uncreated,—then that may be expected to give its tone and complexion to the whole practical development and working out of the relation, both on God's part and on ours. I cannot help thinking that there is such a guiding principle to be found, if rightly sought for, in Holy Scripture.

Here I must once more refer, in the outset of my search, to the holy angels, whom I think we ought to look upon as our brethren in our sonship.

Let us attempt to realise the position of those who stood the test, and their state of mind, when their companions sinned and fell. What a shock to them! They may almost be moved to exclaim: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. xi. 3). What a shuddering sense of insecurity, what a thrill of fear, may pass along the ranks and agitate the bosoms of the faithful, in the view of infidelity on the part of their comrades, so utterly inexcusable and unaccountable.

They are indeed themselves still standing, through grace, in their integrity. But how many who seemed as steadfast and strong as they have miserably fallen! And they have fallen, too, without a cause! There has been no temptation from without, nor any previous corrupt tendency within. And there was nothing in the order issued from the throne that should have awakened in reasonable minds and loving hearts suspicion or resentment. If it was a

demand upon them for homage to the Son (Heb. i. 6), surely that was a most honourable service. But, as it would seem, they insist on having liberty, in the sense of absolute independence. In the mere relation itself of subjectship, necessarily implied in their state as creatures, they find a certain element or source of irksomeness. And when the sense of their being necessarily, simply as creatures, subjects and “servants under the yoke,” is powerfully and pointedly borne in upon their consciousness, by the assertion of sovereign authority, in the form of an express, positive, and peremptory commandment ;—no matter how righteous and even gracious the commandment may be ;—how righteous in its ground or root of equity, how gracious in its loving tendency towards a better state ;—they cannot endure the idea of being thus ruled. In the absence alike of outward solicitation and of inward covetousness or desire, it is not easy to conceive of the trial or temptation which proved fatal to the lost angels, as having been different in its principle, working, and effect, from the line of thought and feeling which I venture hypothetically to trace.

But if so, what a discovery breaks upon the un-fallen ! Is it not, in fact, the discovery of an element of instability inherent in the very constitution and essential nature of the relation of subjectship itself ? It is not an incidental fault or failure in the working out of that relation ;—such as might be remedied for

the present by proper appliances, and prevented for the future by proper precautions. Does it not rather seem to indicate a radical vice, or source of weakness, in the relation itself?\*

For what guarantee, let us ask,—putting ourselves in their place,—could the obedient angels have,—after witnessing the fall of so many of their companions,—what guarantee could they feel themselves to have,—against their own fall, as at least a possible, and even a not very unlikely contingency? No doubt they have stood one trial. They have obeyed, by God's gracious help, as they freely own, in the instance of this one commandment. But who can tell? Other commandments may be issued from the throne; commandments that may be felt to be more grievous. The very necessity now imposed upon them of disowning,—perhaps judging,—so many of their race whom till now they had counted brothers,—may well be supposed to awaken apprehension. May not the sternest loyalty give way? May not the infection, if not of insubordination, yet at least of too sympathetic a pity for the victims of insubordination, grow and spread? Thus these pure spirits may well begin to apprehend that it is only too natural for the creature, as such, to feel the subjection to authority and the obligation of obedience to law, implied in his being a creature, irksome and

\* See Appendix I., on the original form and ultimate glory of service.

vexatious ; that the yoke of mere subjectship is, from its very nature, apt to become galling ; that, apart altogether from the character and condition of those who are under it, if that is their only standing, it has in itself a tendency to call forth in them, be their character ever so pure and their condition ever so good, a disposition to cast it off and to aspire to the liberty of independence. The holy angels have seen all this only too clearly and too terribly proved and exemplified before their eyes. How, after this, can they reckon their own footing, as subjects, to be quite safe ?

For my part I cannot imagine any way in which the standing or position of a creature, considered simply as a subject under the government of God,—when God is viewed exclusively as Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge,—ever can become absolutely and infallibly safe. Of course God is able to keep any one occupying that standing or position, and that alone, in perfect and inviolable security for ever. He can so keep any one anywhere and always. But the standing or position itself may be precarious nevertheless. It is, as I think, a necessity of its very nature to be so. Evidently it was so originally. The fall of the untempted angels, as well as that of tempted man, proves it to have been so. Nor, as regards the unfallen, is there anything in the mere fact of their having on one occasion stood some test of their obedience, and received some gracious acknowledgment for doing so,



that can of itself suffice to make the standing or position itself essentially different, in this respect, from what it was before.

But I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of these holy intelligences being left,—after the issue of that trial which had proved so disastrous to their fellows, and out of which they might well feel that they had made a narrow escape themselves,—on the same footing merely on which they had previously been. “God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love,” in that they have heard his voice, and at his command “worshipped the first begotten.” In the sin of their former associates they have now themselves come to know, in a sense, evil as well as good. And this very knowledge, marring the unconscious confidence of innocent and blissful ignorance, must tend to awaken misgivings in their minds, and make them feel their footing insecure. In short, it would seem that they cannot be allowed to stand where they were. If they are to be protected from the risk and the fear of falling, they must be raised. And so, according to my view, they are. They “receive the adoption of sons;” and that ensures their safety. They are no longer servants only, but also sons. Having been tried, they are now trusted. Having disowned the servile spirit of insubordination, they receive the Spirit of the Son. Having refused to aspire to a lawless liberty of independence, they are—and it is a meet “recompense of reward”—put in

possession "of the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21).

This, as it seems to me, is the peculiar benefit of sonship; this is its great radical, distinctive, characteristic property. It puts an end conclusively to probation, in every sense, and in every form. It secures permanence of position in the household or family of God.

But it is only when it is held to be of the same sort with that of Christ that sonship can be shown to involve this consequence. If we take the merely analogical view of the relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and his children,—conceiving of it simply according to the similitude of fatherhood and sonship among ourselves,—we cannot see in it any element of absolute and inviolable security. A son's standing in his earthly parent's house is not absolutely and inviolably secure. He may go out, or he may be thrust out. It is true he is not, strictly speaking, upon trial; the right to be at home with his father is not, in the ordinary sense of the term, conditional. Still it may be forfeited, or it may be despised and practically renounced. He may be tempted and may fall, and that too even irrecoverably. If our standing as sons in the divine household is imagined to be at the very best simply like my son's standing in mine, it is not divested of the condition of precariousness. There may be more safeguards in the one case than in the other. God is able to take

more care of his children than I can take of mine. That, however, is only a difference of degree. Some insecurity, be it more or less, still attaches to the relation. And if those called to be sons, in the sense now supposed to be put upon sonship, have seen others as good and strong as themselves fall,—or if they have themselves fallen and been with difficulty recovered,—I can see no reason why, even in the bosom of the holy heavenly home, they may not be occasionally, or rather constantly, haunted by the apprehension that possibly after all they may be cast away.

I do not forget here the bearing upon the point now under consideration of the doctrine of free justification. I am quite aware that, apart from sonship altogether, God's act of free grace in justifying those who believe is held to carry with it, as a consequence, involved in its very nature, the inviolable security of the justified. I fully allow, or rather decidedly assert, that by the purpose of God, expressed in his promises, it does so. Nay more, it must be admitted, that in the justified state itself there is that which puts the servant of God in highly favourable circumstances for maintaining his integrity. Holding justification to be perfectly unconditional, so far as we are concerned,—all of grace and not of works,—I can see how it does place us, in some respects, in a better position than that which Adam occupied before he fell. We are not merely put again upon trial and

probation ; permitted as it were to have another chance,—to venture on a second experiment,—to make a new attempt to establish a righteousness of our own. We have always the righteousness of Christ on which we may stand as giving us a title, not inchoate merely, but complete, to acceptance in the sight of God. Unquestionably, therefore, we start upon our new course of obedience, as his subjects and servants, at a great advantage. We have not, like Adam, to make good for ourselves, through the test of trial, our standing as God's righteous subjects and servants, but only to preserve it as freely and gratuitously given to us by God. We have not to work our way to that standing, but only to hold it fast.

Still we have to preserve it and hold it fast. And there is nothing in it or about it, considered simply in itself, to secure infallibly that we shall certainly preserve it and hold it fast. No doubt, as I have already said, God is able to secure this, and is graciously pledged to secure it. But for anything that appears to the contrary, his way of securing it may be just through our receiving the very adoption of sons for which I plead. For let the relation in which we stand to God as subjects and servants be taken at its very best ; let it be taken as it subsists in the case of justified believers, which is its very best ;—I still desiderate in it the element or condition of absolute inviolability.



I consider that our Lord has really settled this whole matter in one remarkable passage which, as I understand it, is the divine key to unlock the mystery of God's fatherhood and his people's sonship, with reference to the present question ;—"The servant abideth not in the house for ever ; but the Son abideth ever. If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed " (John viii. 35, 36).

The Lord is here arguing with "those Jews which believed on him," about liberty. He has given them the promise that if they continue in his word and so prove themselves to be his genuine disciples, they shall "know the truth, and the truth shall make them free" (ver. 31, 32). Then they are not now free. They feel that the Lord's promise implies as much. He regards them as now in bondage ; an imputation which they somewhat indignantly disclaim. They disclaim it as being inconsistent with their being "Abraham's seed" (ver. 33). For they quite well understand that Christ is not speaking of civil or political liberty, or even of what is commonly called religious liberty. The question raised, as they clearly enough perceive, does not respect their position with reference to men at all, but their standing before God in his house or family,—which of course they counted their own church and nation to be. In our relation to God, as being members of his household, are we not already free ? Is not our footing in that relation a footing not of bondage but of freedom ?

Our Lord meets their boast with an appeal to their own consciences : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin ” (ver. 34). You can scarcely deny that you commit sin ; that you do more or less consent and yield yourselves to sin. So far, you serve sin ; and it has dominion over you. You said you never were in bondage ; never had a master. But has not sin some mastery over you ? Then you are not free ; free as you boast, to serve God only ; free to dwell in his house for ever. You may be in God’s house. But if so, it is not as being free in your relation to him ; for that you cannot be while, as committing sin, you are the servants of sin. Your position in the house can be only that of a servant ; a position at the very best precarious and insecure ;—“ for the servant abideth not in the house for ever.” As a servant, the sinner has no right to such a privilege ; nor indeed has he any capacity for realising it. He is distracted between the claim upon him for undivided allegiance on the one hand, and his inclination towards compromise on the other. He can be God’s servant only partially at the best ; being still apt to hanker after independence and self-will, which is essentially the service of sin. Therefore “ the servant abideth not in the house for ever.” He cannot be sure of thus abiding, so long as he is in it merely as a servant.

“ But the Son abideth ever ” (ver. 35). I as the Son am free ;—so the Lord’s hearers must have un-

derstood his words, for they could not doubt that he was speaking of himself ;—I as the Son am free, and as the Son “I abide in the house for ever.” Would you have true freedom? Enter into the freedom which I have as the Son abiding ever in the house.” “For if the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed” (ver. 36).\*

Clearly, as I apprehend his words, the Lord intends, in this divine reasoning, to represent his own sonship, and that alone, as absolutely ensuring permanence of position in the house or family of his Father. And just as clearly, to my mind, he indicates his willingness to share that sonship, and that feature or quality of it, with us.

In this view, the connection is not a little remarkable which he virtually establishes between our participation in his sonship on the one hand, and on the other hand our freedom from the risk or hazard of “committing sin,” so as to forfeit the certainty of our abiding in the house for ever. For I cannot help thinking that the Lord has here in his mind that servile tendency which, as I have already said, I hold to be inherent in mere subjectship, if it be not joined to sonship such as his ;—the tendency, I mean, which must ever make the committing of sin, the sin of insubordination, even to the extent of the subject and servant losing his place in the house, conceivable as at least a possible contingency. He seems to say

\* See Appendix V. for a fuller exposition of this text.

first, that "committing sin" is incompatible with our being free in the house—free, in the sense of being sure of abiding in it for ever. And then he seems to say also, secondly, that if we are only "servants" in the house, and nothing more, we are not, as servants, inviolably safe from "committing sin." Accordingly he assigns this as the reason why we cannot, as servants merely, be absolutely sure of abiding in the house for ever. In order to that, we must become partakers with him in his sonship, and in the freedom which as the Son he has. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

If I am right in this last idea, it may suggest a close harmony between our Lord's teaching in this passage and what, as we have seen, John says in his First Epistle about those who, "being born of God," are "called sons of God," having "his seed remaining in them," as the germ of an absolutely impeccable nature or life—a nature or life incapable of sin (1 John iii. 6-9).<sup>\*</sup> For now we may see how,—both in respect of its implying community of nature, and in respect of its implying community of relation, with Christ the Son,—our sonship, securing our indefectibility by excluding the very possibility of servile sinning, thereby makes our abiding ever in the house absolutely certain. Of course, as regards our sense, or assurance, or apprehension of this certainty,—that can be real-

<sup>\*</sup> See this text discussed in preceding lecture. See also *Exposition of First John* in loco.



ised only in so far as the sonship on which it depends is, in all its fulness of holiness and grace, itself realised. But in so far as it is, the assurance which it warrants is entirely trustworthy. In fact, it is the only assurance any one need desire. "The Son abideth ever."

An attentive study of those two wonderful chapters in Paul's Epistle to the Romans—the seventh and eighth—will not a little confirm the representation which I have now been giving of John's doctrine, and of the Lord's. Let me briefly trace the progress of that experimental exposition.

Emerging out of the depths of an apparently hopeless struggle between his renewed will and the power of indwelling corruption—a struggle in which he feels himself all but overmastered by evil, as if in spite of himself he could not help "committing sin" and so being "the servant of sin"—Paul rises by successive steps to the highest climax of assured triumph and holy joy. And it is worthy of remark that it is mainly through the apprehension of sonship that he reaches that elevation. Deliverance from condemnation, of course, comes first (viii. 1-11). That is fully brought out, so as to do ample justice to the free grace of God in justifying "him which believeth in Jesus." But the apostle passes on and up to the position or platform of sonship. And I think it especially deserving of notice that he very emphatically connects the realisation of our sonship,—or our re-

ceiving the Spirit of adoption to enable us to realise it,—with our mortifying the deeds of the body (12-17); —“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body;”—the very body of which he had so sadly complained a little before, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” —for it is that body about which he now speaks hopefully;—“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” How and why? “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” What can this mean but that it is the fact of our becoming “the sons of God,”—and as such “receiving, not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”—that turns, as it were, the tide of battle in the strife between us and the evil that is in us? “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God;” and so gives us, in virtue of God being our Father and “his seed remaining in us,” the capacity, in a sense and measure, of being sinless,—or of feeling that “we cannot sin because we are born of God.” Continuing servants merely, we could never be quite sure of our standing firm and being successful in striving with the flesh. But now that we are sons, so far as we realise our sonship, we “mortify the deeds of the body;” for, as John puts the same thought in other words, “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.”

Is not Paul’s practical appeal in this passage to

the sonship, as the secret of the believer's victory over indwelling sin, proved thus to be in harmony with the Lord's representation, as I have been trying to explain it? And is it not very much equivalent to what John says in his Epistle: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (iv. 5). For he so believes as to partake with the Son of God in his sonship.\*

But Paul has not done with the sonship when he represents our realising it, by receiving the Spirit of adoption, as that grace or experience by which we "mortify the deeds of the body," and "overcome the world." He fills his own mind, and ours, with large expectations of future blessedness and joy, connected with the sense of this sonship, attested by our own conscience and the Spirit's powerful co-operation. He brings in all creation as waiting anxiously for these expectations to be fulfilled in "the manifestation of the sons of God" (ver. 19-22). And having reconciled himself and us to this attitude of waiting, amid creation's groanings and our own, by reminding us of the Spirit of the Son ever "helping our infirmities" (ver. 23-27),—he carries us far back into the depths of the past eternity, that we may see there the original and everlasting ground of our

\* See *Exposition of First John*, in loco.

security as sons of God by adoption—which is really nothing short of the security of that only-begotten and well-beloved Son with whom our adoption makes us one ;—“ Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren ; moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Finally, he crowns the whole with the bright view of God’s eternal purpose at last accomplished, and his Son rejoicing as “ the first-born among many brethren,” all “ conformed to his image as the Son ” and so glorified with him.

Thus the apostle fixes, on the side, as it were, of both eternities, “ the sacred chain that binds the earth to heaven above.” Called as sinners—justified as subjects—glorified as sons ; so runs the climax. Whereupon there breaks forth the greatest perhaps of all the songs of inspiration ; beginning with “ What shall we then say to these things ? if God be for us, who can be against us ? ”—and ending with the glorious challenge—“ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ” (ver. 31-39).\*

\* See *Reply* to Dr. Crawford in supplementary volume.



This element of inviolability—"the Son abideth ever"—is what determines the whole character of the relation of fatherhood and sonship, as subsisting between God and any of his subjects and servants. Christ was in the position of a subject and servant when he uttered the words. And I can almost fancy that I see him as he uttered them. I think it must be with intense self-consciousness that he utters them. There is a falling back upon himself and his own unchanging fellowship with the Father, in his utterance of them. Let what may happen, "the Son abideth ever." He instantly, indeed, dismisses all exclusive thought of self, as if he stood alone. What I am I would have you to be; but what I chiefly think of when I say that, is that "the Son abideth ever." It is the sense of my "abiding ever," as the Son, in the Father's house, that sustains me, whether you "continue in my words" or not. And it is that "abiding ever in the Father's house," and the sense of it, that I long to share with you; making you free, as I am free: "For if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

All through his service of humiliation this thought was ever present to his heart—"the Son abideth ever." It was his consolation, his strength, his joy. It gives singular weight and force to very many of his expressions with reference to what the Father is to him and he is to the Father; investing them, as it does, with a certain strange complexion or character

of conscious, confident unchangeableness. Hence the intense repose which, amid all its strange and often terrible vicissitudes, marked the life of Christ. Hence his sleeping in the storm, and his quiet demeanour before Caiaphas and Pilate. He was always self-possessed, because he was always conscious of his sonship, and of his abiding ever as the Son in the Father's house. There was no need of haste; no room for feverish or fitful agitation. Let him be working ever so busily, let him be suffering ever so acutely, Jesus is always resting. "The Son abideth ever."

Is not this the explanation of the calm, serene, quiet peace which underlies the whole troubled experience of Christ? "The Son abideth ever." Let him be tried, buffeted, tormented to the utmost; let him even have to be made sin and made a curse for us; still "the Son abideth ever." And he can say in the worst extremity, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" having said just before, in the same spirit of unruffled composure, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus "the Son abideth ever."

"The Son abideth ever." I believe that if we study the human and earthly life of Christ with that as the motto or key to it, we may come to a better understanding of what the relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and us, if we are in his Son,

really is,—and ought to be apprehended by us to be, —than we could do by means of the most minute and articulate enumeration of fatherly acts and offices on the part of God, and filial duties and responsibilities on our part. I own, therefore, that I have a feeling of relief in being warrantably compelled to say, that I have no time or space left for what I might call relational details. The relation itself is manifested and acted out in the history of the man Christ Jesus. Let an insight into the relation be got by deep thought exercised upon the history. Let it be thought, however, based upon this one condition—that there is in the relation a very peculiar element of inviolability. “The Son abideth ever.” All other conceivable relations, so far as I can see, may be violated. Husband and wife may part. Rulers and subjects may be arrayed in arms against one another. Friends may disagree, and brothers may fight. Parent and child on earth may be mortal foes. All other conceivable relations admit of fluctuation and variety, according to change of circumstances. They are all liable to breaks and interruptions; to fitful and capricious movements on one side or other; to strange alternations of pathos and of passion. This relation alone; the relation between the Eternal Father and his Incarnate Son,—and in him, so far as they can realise it,—between “his Father and their Father” and “the little ones whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren;” this relation alone is always and for

ever the same. From whatever may be turbulent, uncertain, or uneasy, in any other relation, we may take refuge at any time in this one. Be the temptation that assails us ever so strong; be the affliction that tries us ever so severe; be the work we have to do ever so hard, or the death we have to die ever so cruel;—in the unchanging fatherhood of God we, like his Son, may have evermore quiet peace.

Is it not in this view worthy of remark that it is in immediate connection with one of his most intensely filial appeals to the Father,—that which opens with such a burst of grateful love, “I thank thee, O Father,” and closes with so sublime an assertion of mutual intimacy and insight, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him,”—that Jesus issues his gracious invitation to the weary, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” and gives them his gracious assurance of relief,—“I will give you rest” (Matt. xi. 25-30)? It is his own rest which he promises to share with them; the rest which his “meek and lowly heart” always possessed, under a yoke of obligation such as never any other had to take upon him, and a burden of obedience such as never any other had to bear or to fulfil; the rest which made him feel even “that yoke easy and that burden light.” “I will give you rest.” Surely, I repeat, it is his own rest he means to say that he will



give,—as it is his own yoke he would have them to make theirs,—“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.” It is that rest in the Father’s knowledge of the Son and the Son’s knowledge of the Father of which he has just been speaking. His own knowledge of the Father he shares with them, revealing to them the Father. And it is by sharing with them his own knowledge of fatherly and filial love that he shares with them his own rest ;—the rest which that knowledge must always have imparted to his own soul, even when it was most troubled.

Have we not here the essence of what is implied, whether in the way of privilege or in the way of duty, in the relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and us ?—First, there is rest, the Son’s own rest, in the ever-present consciousness of his filial fellowship with the Father. And then, secondly, there is the Son’s own “meekness and lowliness of heart,” as he takes upon him whatever yoke the Father is pleased to lay upon his neck, and bears whatever burden the Father is pleased to lay upon his shoulders. For so he sustains that joint character of the Father’s servant and the Father’s son, in which he “glorifies the Father on the earth, and finishes the work which the Father giveth him to do” (John xvii. 4).

I now bring these lectures to a close. I do so with the feeling that, however inadequately I have handled my great theme, I have at least thrown out

some suggestive thoughts, and in the hope that more competent workmen may enter into my labour, and rear a better structure. For I cannot divest myself of the impression that the subject has not hitherto been adequately treated in the Church. In particular, I venture a critical observation on the theology of the Reformation. In that theology the subject of adoption, or the sonship of Christ's disciples, did not, as it seems to me, occupy the place and receive the prominence to which it is on scriptural grounds entitled. It may be thought at first sight presumptuous to hazard this remark; but let the explanation which I am disposed to give of the fact be duly considered. The Reformers had enough to do to vindicate "the article of a standing or falling church"—justification by faith alone; to recover it out of the chaos of Popish error and superstition; and to reassert it in its right connection with the doctrine of the absolute Divine Sovereignty which Augustine had so well established. Their hands were full. It need not be matter of surprise that in their case,—as well as in that of their predecessors, the early fathers,—there should have been lines of theological inquiry on which they scarcely at all entered.

One might almost say that it has fared somewhat ill with the truth as regards God's fatherhood and his people's sonship at both eras—both in the primitive Church and in the Church of the Reformation. It may, perhaps, in some respects, have had more

justice done to it at the former era than at the latter ; although the patristic literature shows too plainly how the controversies about the supreme divinity of the Son tended to draw men's minds away from the sonship of his disciples. The divines of the Protestant Reformation and their successors gave their main strength to the questions at issue between them and Rome ; of which questions this could scarcely be said to be one. The creeds and confessions of the Protestant and Reformed Churches, as well as the theological systems of their colleges, are for the most part extremely meagre and defective in what they say on the subject. In some it is not even noticed ; in others it is made a part of justification, or a mere appendix to it ; in none, I believe, does it receive sufficiently full and distinct treatment. Hence perhaps it is that the doctrine of the fatherhood has been so little understood and so much abused in recent days.

I have long had the impression that in the region of that great truth there lies a rich field of precious ore yet to be surveyed and explored ; and that somewhere in that direction theology has fresh work to do, and fresh treasures to bring out of the storehouse of the Divine Word. For I am not one of those who would lay an arrest on progress in the science of divinity, and compel it to be stationary. I would not, indeed, be disposed to reopen discussions which, after ample investigation, under the useful and per-

haps necessary pressure of controversy, have been satisfactorily closed, or to unsettle the conclusions to which the Churches have harmoniously come on the vital and cardinal articles of the faith. I do not call for any revision of our creeds, confessions, and catechisms. By all means let them stand untouched ; as monuments of the vast erudition and mental power of other days, and as safeguards of truth and bulwarks against error for ages yet to come. But it is no disparagement to these symbols to say of them that they do not exhaust the whole volume of revelation. For that is simply saying that the compilers were uninspired men, and that "the riches of Christ are unsearchable."

Take our own books for instance, our Confession and Catechisms. I never have had any scruple to affirm that their statements on the subject of adoption are by no means satisfactory. No doubt all that they say is true ; but it amounts to very little. The answer in the Shorter Catechism is really, in substance, scarcely anything more than that adoption is adoption. In the other documents, the matter is handled more fully, and some of the privileges of the children of God are enumerated. Still even in them the whole matter is left in the last degree vague and indefinite. And no information whatever is given, nor is any opinion expressed, as to how the relation of sonship is constituted, or as to what its precise nature is, viewed in the light of the incarnation.



The contrast is very remarkable, in this respect, between their treatment of the subject of adoption, and their treatment of all the other topics connected with the purchase and application of redemption ; plainly showing, as I cannot but conclude, that while they had fully matured their views and made up their minds upon these last,—and were, in fact, quite at home in them,—they were very much at sea as to the former,—or had not sufficient leisure to master it.

I hold them, therefore, to have virtually left the whole of that department of theology which bears on God's paternal relation to his people, and their filial relation to him, to a large extent an open question, or *tabula rasa*, so far as any formal verdict or deliverance of theirs is concerned. I consider that we have the fullest liberty to sink new shafts in this mine, which they evidently had not adequately explored, if only we take care that our diggings shall do no damage to any of the far more important mines which they did explore,—and explored so thoroughly and so well.

I have endeavoured to lend some help in the way of, as it were, breaking ground. I have sought to observe the caution which I have now given, and I trust I have not violated it. Some of the thoughts I have ventured to throw out may seem to some critics to be nothing better than speculations. But I hope it will be admitted that none of them touch the

foundations of the sacred temple of truth, or displace any of its stones. What I have advanced may, perhaps, in the long run, and in other hands, add some features of symmetry and beauty to the structure, and even strengthen some of its buttresses. But all the old glory remains untarnished; all the old refuges for the weary and the lost are as open and as secure as ever.

I thoroughly believe that the line of inquiry which I have been tracing is as safe as I think it will prove to be interesting for any one who will prosecute it with due reverence, docility, and humility of spirit. I commend the subject to the study of younger and fresher minds. And in doing so, I can scarcely suggest a better text from which to start than that wonderful answer, as it has always appeared to me, in the Larger Catechism, to the question (65), "What special benefits do the members of the invisible Church enjoy by Christ?" They "enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory."\* This covers and comprehends all;

\* I think it worthy of special notice how our Westminster Standards, sometimes held to consist of hard and dry abstractions, place so much stress on personal union to Christ as the explanation of our being made partakers of the benefits of redemption. Applying this answer in the Larger Catechism,—which is involved in what the Shorter Catechism says of "the Spirit uniting us to Christ by working faith in us,"—to these benefits in detail, as given in the latter document,—and understanding the distinction between grace and glory to be chiefly this, that the one

union inferring communion. It explains their justification, as being community of righteousness with him. It explains their regeneration and sanctification, as being community of nature with him. It explains their adoption, as being community of sonship with him. To which last I assign the highest place. For whereas in the others we have communion with him principally in grace, it is pre-eminently in the sonship that we have communion with him in glory.

seeks the remedying of the evil of the fall, while the other points rather to something more than mere restoration,—we may put the matter thus :—“Justification,” with “assurance of God’s love and peace of conscience” in its train, is participation with Christ in his righteousness, or in his work of obedience and atonement, and is therefore communion with him in grace. “Sanctification,” including “increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end,” is our participation with Christ in his holiness or in his holy nature, implying not only the mortification of sin, but the attainment of a higher life, and is therefore communion with him partly in grace and partly in glory. “Adoption,” carrying in its bosom “joy in the Holy Ghost,” is our participation with Christ in his sonship, which, even as now realised on earth, and especially as being the crowning blessedness of heaven, is communion with him pre-eminently and emphatically in glory. The change of order which I suggest may thus, I think, be explained and vindicated (*Larger Catechism*, Q. 65 ; and *Shorter do.*, Q. 29-36).

## APPENDIX OF SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

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### I.

#### THE GLORY OF FILIAL SERVICE.

And his servants shall serve him.—REV. xxii. 3.

It is the blessedness of heaven that is here described. The locality may be earth ; but it is earth renovated and delivered from the curse of the fall. The moral and spiritual aspect of the whole scene shows that it represents the Church's eternal state. Of that perfect and happy state this is one chief characteristic, "His servants shall serve him."

It is a notable feature, and it is put in a notable way. It is put almost as if it were God's satisfaction, and not ours, that it was intended to express. At last he has gained his end. At the close of that wondrous march of his providence over angels and men of which the Bible traces the footsteps,—as the consummation of all his manifold dealings with his intelligent creatures,—by much pains, as it were, and after long waiting,—he succeeds in his object. He finds himself presiding over such a household as pleases him. "His servants shall serve him."



But if this is the object on which the heart of God is set, why may it not be at once and from the beginning realised? Why may not the creative act or word surround the Creator at once with circle upon circle of obsequious subjects, as pliant and plastic in his hand as wind or fire? Servants to serve him according to his mind he may surely have, in any number, and of any variety of structure and capacity,—from the inert and shapeless mass of matter, upwards through all gradations of life, sense, and mind, to the highest faculty of thought and will, inferior only to his own. May he not thus find the sort of agents needed to perfect his ideal of the universe which he would have to unfold his glory? No. The end is not to be thus summarily attained. The attainment of it is not the triumph of creation, but the result of an entirely different process;—a long providential and administrative system, to which angels and men have been subjected, and out of which this glorious issue comes, “His servants shall serve him.”

This service of God, in its origin, progress, and perfection, may be traced in five successive stages.

I. God made the angels to serve him;—endowing them with suitable capacities, and placing them in circumstances favourable to the exercise and expansion of these capacities. All things were propitious; evil was unknown; there could be no temptation. One would think that perfect service was thus secured.

The recorded fact, however, of a rebellion in that angelic world, proves that there must have been something in or about the service not altogether and absolutely good. It could be nothing amiss in what God required, or in the moral nature of those of whom it was required. But that somehow the position was such as might become the occasion of feelings of insubordination springing up even in pure minds and innocent hearts,—the actual result proves.

Our Lord identifies the offence of the apostate spirit; he “abode not in the truth.” If he had, “the truth would have made him free” in serving; and he would have coveted no other freedom (John viii. 32, 34). Paul speaks of pride, or being “lifted up with pride,” as “the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. iii. 6). And Jude describes the sad company as “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (ver. 6). They “kept not their first estate;” or rather their “principality.” They were not content with the princely rank originally belonging to them. They “left their own habitation,”—the place assigned to them as their own, their proper sphere for serving God. It would thus appear that the evil originated in a desire on their part to be upon some other footing with God than that on which, as at first created, they stood.

The desire may, or rather must, have sprung up in connection with some particular command. I conceive it to have been the command which the

Psalmist, as interpreted by the apostle, indicates : “When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world,”—perhaps for the first time at the creation of our world and our race,—“he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Hebrews i. 6). Exception is taken, if not to the thing commanded, at least to its being commanded. These “princes” will not “abide in the truth ;”—in their true position of dependence, duty, and responsibility. They “are lifted up with pride ;” they become impatient of subjection and obligation. To worship “the first-begotten” may be all well ; but to worship him upon compulsion and command is not so. They would have it left to their own free discretion. They are not content to be princes under the Most High. They would be “as gods” themselves ; they would be their own masters.

The possibility of this dark spirit of jealousy insinuating itself into the thoughts of these servants of God shows how, even before their sin and fall, there was some element of imperfection—some latent root of possible bitterness—in that state itself. It was not a state with reference to which it could be said with full assurance, “His servants shall serve him.”

II. May we venture to look into the abode of the angels after their ranks have been disastrously thinned ? He whom, at the Father’s command, they have consented to worship—“the first begotten”—is among them. But for that, blank consternation may

well be on every face, and a painful misgiving in every heart. True, they have stood the test; and their obedience, doubtless, is rewarded by some decisive token of the divine regard. But it is a terrible proof of the peccability of their nature and the precariousness of their position that is ever before their eyes. The poet says—"Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." But ignorance is now out of the question. They know the possibility of transgression; and though they know its penalty too, that does not allay their anxiety. The mere dread of incurring the doom of disobedience will go but a little way to reconcile them to a condition of things which so many of their number felt to be irksome and intolerable. It may prevent the outward and overt act of rebellion. But it does not tell upon their inner nature; or, if it does, it is at least as apt to irritate as to subdue. So far, then, as the influence of the sad catastrophe itself goes, it makes no change for the better in the standing of those elect ones who, through grace, survive it. On the contrary, they may seem to be even in worse circumstances than before for serving God.

That, however, cannot be. He whom the Father has been introducing to them for their worship, will see to it that it shall not be. He will at all events prevent any injury coming upon them through the knowledge of evil which they have unwillingly got. By his divine presence with them, and by the power of his Spirit in them, he will so confirm them in their



loyalty to his Father's throne that no sense of present insecurity, and no fear of future danger, shall mar their serene and settled peace.

But more than that he does. From henceforth he has their regards fixed upon himself. In obedience to the Father's command they have worshipped the Son. Already, as their recompense, they see his glory, as the glory of one altogether worthy of their worship. But the Father's voice to them is, Ye shall see greater things than this. Worship him still, wait, and watch. Keep your eyes fixed on him. For in him, as you are soon to find, a higher and better platform is to be reached, on which God's "servants shall serve him."

III. For what is the next important step in this development of service? I pass over the probation and the fall of man; events but too well fitted to awaken new alarm, as if another experiment had been tried and failed. I come at once to the incarnation; that great era to which, without knowing beforehand its precise nature, not only believing men were accustomed to look forward, but the unfallen spirits also. For they clung in faith and hope to him whom the Father would have them to worship; being taught to expect some still more signal "bringing in of the first-begotten into the world" than that which had been the trial of their obedience, and its reward. As "the fulness of the time" drew near, the angels,—having accompanied this Divine Person in all his previous intercourse with the patriarchs and with the

ancient church,—had their eyes rivetted on Bethlehem-Ephratah,—whence he was to “come forth unto God, who was to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth had been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah v. 2). They took part in the divine arrangements about the births of the Baptist and the Christ. And when the holy child Jesus, of whom they spoke to the shepherds, lay before them in the manger, we can imagine a voice coming to them “from the excellent glory,”—“Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth” (Is. xlii. 1).

Service is now to be ennobled indeed. In every view it is to be so ; in the person of the servant ; in the actual work of the service ; and in the spirit pervading it all.

1. Who is this servant? A man—the man Christ Jesus ; a volunteer—his manhood voluntarily assumed, his service voluntarily undertaken ; a Son—the Eternal Son of God the Father, whose servant he becomes ! Son of God and Son of Man ; uniting in his own person the highest prerogative of rule and the humblest obligation to service ; entitled to command the whole universe, as its Creator-God, and bound, in his created manhood, to be under the yoke in this narrow corner of his own vast dominions ;—what a servant has the Father found to serve him now ! 2. And then, what is the service? It is service undertaken in the room and stead of others ; and these others, the fallen children of men. The

terms of it are his fulfilling all their obligations and meeting all their liabilities. He consents to be their substitute under the law whose precept of love they have failed to obey, whose penalty of death they have righteously incurred. And he consents to this, in the full knowledge that the obedience required of them must be rendered by him; and the penalty incurred by them must be visited on him,—to the very uttermost of the law's demands. 3. And what of the spirit pervading the whole service? Meek, gentle, uncomplaining submission; the entire surrender of his subject will to the will of him whose subject he is; unshaken loyalty; disinterested, self-sacrificing affection; these features, and such as these, marked the spirit in which this wondrous servant served his wondrous service. In one word, the spirit of that service was sympathy; sympathy with him whose servant he was; sympathy with the service itself;—"I and my father are one;"—"the works which the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son;"—"my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

It is real and actual service all along; throughout it all he simply served,—not acting for himself, in self-support, self-vindication, or self-defence,—but acting wholly for God and leaving all to God. It was service growing dark and dreadful as its close drew near. In prospect, it appalled his human spirit with its unutterable woe; and when the hour came

at last, full fraught with the venom of sin's sting and curse, and the blood-red wine of the righteous wrath of the Most High, he sank under the burden as well nigh more than even he could bear. But still he simply served. As a servant under the yoke, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost;—with these words upon his lips,—expressive of a servant's resignation as well as of a Son's trust,—“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Well may the Father say, “Behold my servant!”

IV. What a voice to echo through all worlds—in hell; in heaven; and on earth! “Behold my servant!”

(1.) Is it heard in hell? Does it ring in the ears of lost angels, and lost men? For lost angels—See what that service of God is which you resented as a galling burden and spurned as a humiliating bondage! The place which was not high enough, or free enough, for you, the very Son of the Highest himself does not disdain to occupy. You, indeed, would not be servants; it seemed drudgery and restraint to you. What worship you were to render, what work you were to do, must be matter of spontaneous choice, not of prescribed command. To worship and work to order,—to be obedient merely, nothing more, and nothing else,—you felt to be an unworthy sort of homage from you to God; unworthy of your angelic nature and your princely rank. So you felt once. But what have you to say now? What plea have



you now,—when God points to the birth, the life, the death of his own Son, and says,—“Behold my servant!” For lost men—How will they feel when at last, too late, the full meaning of that service of the Son of God flashes upon them? If we lift up our eyes in hell, being in torment,—sharing the punishment prepared for the devil and his angels—compelled by God to “behold his servant,” and as we behold him, to justify God and condemn ourselves—how must we recall, with unavailing groans of self-reproach, the day, the hour, when he invited us to share with him in that service of his ;—in its infinite worth and efficacy, its happy fruit and issue, its gracious filial spirit! Ah! it must be a terrible voice for hell’s inhabitants to be hearing always—“Behold my servant!”

2. It must have been a blessed voice when heard in heaven. When the obedient angels saw him whom they worshipped “taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of man ;” when they saw him “being found in fashion as a man, humbling himself and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ;” they were well prepared to worship him anew, even in his humiliation. When “God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” all their tongues were ready to “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. ii. 7-11). For now to these bright

“morning-stars,” the mystery of that service of God which is perfect freedom is unveiled in the person of this Son and Servant, and in his wondrous work. Nor is it as mere onlookers that they get an insight into this mystery. As he has carried them along with him in all his ministry towards our fallen race,—and very specially in his taking our nature and serving, even to suffering, in our stead,—so now he carries them along with him and associates them with himself in his subjection to the Father, as at once his Servant and his Son. They partake with him in the full grace and glory of that double relationship. Service is to them what they perceive it to have been to him. It is divested of every element of precariousness, and therefore of every element of grievousness. It is their joy and crown. Their footing is identical with that of him whom they worship. It is as sons of God, “in the first begotten,” that these servants of God in heaven now serve him ; hearing always the voice that points out the great exemplar—“Behold my servant!”

3. To the followers of Christ on earth this voice should come home with peculiar power—“Behold my servant!” See how the Son, as servant, served God ! And learn how God would have you, as sons, to serve him in the Son !

First, however, let us make sure that we enter into that service of the Son, as undertaken and accomplished for us. It stands for us instead of any service that might be required of us as the condition of

our peace with God. Let us look ever first at the servant and the service in that light. As the bankrupt and beggared servants of a righteous God, laden with the burden of long accumulated guilt, utterly unable either to cancel the past, or to satisfy the claims of the present and the future, let us accept as our substitute this servant whom our Father has chosen for us. What fault have we to find with him? Personally, is not he every way qualified to represent us, to consult and act for us, to serve on our behalf? To serve! And what service? Does it not fulfil all righteousness and atone for all sin? Is it not, as a service of penal endurance, adequate to the utmost rigour of punishment that we have deserved? Is it not, as a service of merit, enough to purchase the choicest blessings that God's favour can bestow? Let us thankfully accept this servant, and his service, as ours. Let us suffer him to place us where his service entitles all for whom it avails to be placed. And where is that? Where, but where he is himself? It is his position that we are to occupy; it is his relation to God that we share. And whatever service is now imposed upon us—it is as occupying his position and sharing his relation that we meet it.

Then may it not be expected that the spirit which pervaded all his service shall pervade ours also? If our standing is thus identical with his,—if we receive the adoption of sons, in and with the Son of God, and have his spirit in us, crying, “Abba, Father,”

should not the service of God be to us precisely what it was to him? It may extort from us groans; it extorted them from him. Its toil may weary us; it wearied him. Its pain may make our soul, as it made his, exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Our fellow-servants—the angels—know well what our sufferings may be in the service which they see us share with him whose sufferings they never can forget. They delight to stand by us as they stood by him, when, as “ministering spirits,” they are “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” But the loyalty to God his Father, and the sympathy with God his Father, which they saw in him throughout all his service, they may, in a measure, see also in his brethren. Not only in the fervid apostle whom the zeal of God’s house is eating up and the love of souls is urging to an untimely tomb; not only in the martyr whose service is to praise God amid the flames; but in this hewer of wood or drawer of water making conscience of serving God in his lowly calling; in yonder poor, bed-ridden, widowed, childless soul, content that her service should be solitary suffering and waiting for the Lord—the same mind may be found which was in Christ. Angels, as they look on, rejoice to perceive how, even in this sin-burdened earth, God has servants who really serve him. And when the earthly service, with all its trials, is over, they rejoice to carry them to Abraham’s bosom.



V. But it is not in this present state of things that the object on which the heart of God is set is altogether attained. Even for the angels, and still more for the saints, a change for the better is in reserve. There are things in God's majestic plan which the angels desire to look into, and which they cannot so look into as to be satisfied, until they see what the end is. Even they must be taking much on trust, and living by faith, as to not a few particulars in the great volume of providence now unrolling itself before them—the sealed book which the Lion of the tribe of Judah is only gradually opening. Saints on earth, at any rate, are compassed about with many infirmities ; exposed to manifold assaults of the devil ; and so tempted and wounded in the war they have to wage with evil that they find it no easy matter always to feel that "God's commandments are not grievous." And even saints gone to their rest are waiting for the resurrection of the body. "The family in heaven and earth that is named of our Lord Jesus Christ"—is broken, divided, tossed and tried ; great part of it still journeying through the wilderness ; none of it having, at the very best, anything more than a sort of Mount Pisgah view, as yet, of the full blessedness of the land of promise.

It is otherwise when "the Lord cometh again." A fresh song of praise bursts from the hosts of heaven, as they accompany the "first-begotten," once more

coming forth—"brought in" by the Father—into the world, on the final occasion of his re-union with his redeemed. The great reconciliation is complete. The mystery of God is finished—the mystery of his will, which he hath purposed—"that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth" (Eph. i. 9, 10). All are gathered together, all are one in Christ. His service of obedience and atonement has effected the full reconciliation; accomplished the eternal purpose; consummated the universal union. And now, what remains? What but this eternal glory and joy—"His servants shall serve him?"

The service of God, thus reached and realised, who may venture to describe? Some of its conditions, however, are indicated in the context (ver. 3-5).

1. (Ver. 3.) "There shall be no more curse." Not only are we to be ourselves fully delivered from the curse; but nowhere all around is there to be any trace of its malign influence; and never again is there to be any risk of its return. No blight of sin is on the soil we tread; no taint of sin is in the air we breathe; no evil element is in the paths we have to tread—the works we have to do—the pleasures we have to enjoy—the company we have to keep. All is holiness and peace.

2. (Ver. 3.) "The throne of God and<sup>h</sup> of the Lamb shall be in the city." No anarchy, or lawless liberty, or proud self-government is there. Subordination,

discipline, and order prevail. God manifestly reigns. And he reigns in a character that must charm away all jealousy, even in the most sensitive of his subjects. "The Lamb is in the midst of the throne." Subjection to that throne never can be felt to be irksome. One look at "the throne of God and of the Lamb" must over suffice to satisfy.

3. (Ver. 4.) "They shall see his face." It is a blessed thing to see God's face even now. The sight of it, by faith, makes duty pleasant, and even trial sweet. Alas! however, that face is often hidden. Dark clouds of unbelief roll in upon the soul. Or there is a frown, a shade, upon my Father's loving countenance. My waywardness and wilfulness have dimmed, as it were, his loving eye with grief, and made him turn away from me his loving look. What spirit have I then for his work? What courage to fight his battles? What strength to face temptation? What enlargement of heart or opening of lip to show forth his praise, and teach transgressors his ways? How wearisome is the whole business of obeying him and doing his will felt to be! What a drudgery does it become! What a lifeless and joyless form! What must it be for me, as God's servant, to serve him, when no such experience can ever any more be mine—when I shall see his face always!

4. (Ver. 4.) "And his name shall be in their foreheads." When we stand "with the Lamb on Mount Zion," with the "hundred, forty and four thousand,"

—we are sealed as his servants for preservation from the winds of judgment. We have even now “his Father’s name written in our foreheads.” It is a hidden name; legible enough to the Lamb, and to the angels executing his pleasure; but not legible to an unbelieving world, and, alas! not always legible to ourselves. In mingling with the multitude who, instead of that name, receive “the mark of the beast in their right hand or in their foreheads”—it is not always easy for us to maintain our integrity as the Lord’s servants, and not his,—“to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.” But in that city, all have the same character; all are impressed with the same seal! From every brow there flashes in glowing brightness the same new name—the name that is above every name. There is no promiscuous fellowship with the ungodly to disturb or deaden pious feeling; to disconcert or embarrass a pious walk. Nor in fellowship with one another is there any of that hesitancy which too often casts a damp over pious meetings here. There all alike mutually know and are known. They never can be hinderers,—they never can be other than helpers,—of one another’s joy in serving the Lord.

5. (Ver. 5.) “There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.” All is open, beatific vision. “They that fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant” may sometimes “walk in darkness” here.



It may be darkness that dims, not only their comfortable assurance, but their clear and certain perception of the path of duty. They see no light; or the light they see comes fitfully, in gleams and glimpses; sharing the imperfection of the instruments and channels through which it reaches them. It is midnight with them, and they have only a little flickering candle to shed its unsteady flame into the thick gloom in which they are groping. Even if it is midday with them, and the bright meridian orb is over their head, its scorching rays may smite or blind them; or yonder cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, may, in a moment clothe the sky in sackcloth. Oh! to be where there is no night, to make the twinkling taper welcome; nor even any day, dependent for its clearness on a material sun! To know God and his will, not circuitously, through means, ordinances, and providences; but directly, by immediate insight into himself and immediate communication from himself! No more distraction, no more despondency, when thus seeing light in his light—"his servants shall serve him."

6. (Ver. 5.) "They shall reign for ever and ever." It is as reigning with him that they "see light in his light." It is from his point of view, as seated on his throne, that they survey and contemplate all things. Their reigning with him is partly the effect of their having learned to serve him faithfully; otherwise, he could not so far trust them as to admit them to any participation in his authority and rule. Hence the

welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many." But their promotion after faithful service is chiefly valuable in their eyes because it enables them to render service more faithful still. The position which they occupy raises them above the questionings and heart-burnings, the jealousies and misgivings, that are apt to rankle in the minds of mere subjects. The confidence reposed in them honourably binds them. Because "they shall reign" with him, therefore his "servants shall serve him."

Such is the sort of service which God will have hereafter, and which he longs to have now, at our hands.

1. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "The Father seeketh such to worship him ;" he is weary of all other worship. I, his Son, am come to tell you so. Nay, I am come to see to it, that what the Father seeks he shall surely find. Yes ! though it is to cost me the shedding of my blood, to expiate guilt and win the gift of the Holy Ghost,—that men, reconciled and renewed, may give my Father what he wants—their hearts. Let all formalists—all whose religion, such as it is, and it is not much, is a mere weariness of the flesh ; a painful perfunctory work of necessity ; a routine which they dare not dispense with but cannot take delight in—hear this solemn warning. His ser-

vants,—the only servants he cares to have,—are such as make his service a reality. “His servants shall serve him.”

2. And what is the first and indispensable condition of our thus serving him? Is it not to shake ourselves free from the legal covenant which “gendereth to bondage,” and close with the covenant of free grace and perfect peace? We must renounce our own service, as placing us on a right footing with God, and accept as our substitute him whom the Father commends to us as “his Servant;”—laying hold on “the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life” (Luke i. 73-75).

3. That we may “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,” we must beware, above all things, of a servile spirit; the spirit that is ever grudging what is asked, and stretching to the utmost any license supposed to be allowed; the spirit of bondage that is always prompting the questions,—must I? may I? may I not? The “Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” speaks otherwise;—“O Lord, truly I am thy servant. I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds” (Psalm cxvi. 16).

4. The same Spirit of adoption enables us also to

enter with enlarged hearts into the vast and comprehensive plan of God, for “gathering together into one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are in earth.” Thus the spirit of bondage is kept out. The imagination and the heart are filled with sublime views of God’s magnificent purpose in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord ;—so as to be ever anticipating that bright day when we shall join the assembled throng, whose highest glory is,—that “reigning with God,” they, as “his servants, serve him.”

Satan’s proud defiance is, “Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.” Alas, it is as vain as it is proud ! In the place of torment, God, in his terrible justice, reigns alone. Satan, and his angels, and his victims, serve in penal chains and fire for ever. But the saints who have “overcome are set down with Christ on his throne, even as he overcame, and is set down with the Father on his throne.” All in the Father’s confidence, all in the Father’s interest, all sharing the glory of the Father’s reign,—they “are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Rev. vii. 15).



## II.

### THE GOSPEL CONVOCATION.

“Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—HEB. xii. 22-24.

THE warning (25), “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,” refers to the judgment of God on the generation of Israel which he brought out of Egypt. That indeed is the warning which all through this epistle is held up before the eyes of the believing Hebrews. Let them beware of the sin of their forefathers. In their case, it must be a sin peculiarly aggravated, in proportion as their privilege is peculiarly high. Their forefathers stood before God at Sinai, and heard him speak “on earth” (25), “his voice then shook the earth” (26). But they themselves have heard him, as it were, “from heaven” (25), his voice shaking not the earth only, but also heaven (26), effecting a far more complete renovation, introducing not a temporary but a permanent economy. It is in this connec-

tion that a scene is here described having the same relation to the new economy that the Sinai scene had to the old. "Ye are come" to this, as your fathers came to that ; and you are to realise your position and its responsibility accordingly.

Of the three verses descriptive of the scene (22-24), the first gives the place of meeting and the audience ; the second, the actual convocation, or the parties convened ; and the third, the business on hand and the manner of its transaction.

I. (Ver. 22.) The first verse, giving the place of meeting and the audience, needs little remark. The place of meeting is "mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." It is evidently a place that is meant, not a society or church ; and it is evidently no earthly place. It is a heavenly locality, ideal to us now, but yet real, and soon to be realised. The audience or spectators are the angels. They were witnesses from above of the scene at Sinai ; they are also witnesses of this scene ; and not mere witnesses, but deeply interested parties, looking on with intensest sympathy.

II. (Ver. 23.) In this place and in this presence a meeting of a solemn judicial character, is convened. In the centre sits the President, and on either side stands a company awaiting his award.

The president is "God, the Judge of all." Some would read, "the Judge, the God of all." They prefer that rendering, because it seems to divest the scene

of its terror. The Judge is presiding; but he is to all who are before him “their God.” But this interpretation, besides doing violence to the language, proceeds upon a very inadequate, if not erroneous theory of the apostle’s design,—which is not really to abate fear, but to quicken it. God is here enthroned; “the Judge of all;” of all now before him; their lawgiver, ruler, lord, and king. It is in that character that he presides over the assembly. It is for legislative and governmental purposes that he takes his seat upon the throne.

Two separate and distinct bodies are marshalled on opposite sides of the throne.

1. On one side, there are “the first-born, which are written in heaven.” They are the first-born; distinguished from among men, as the first-born of the Israelites were from among their fellows; or rather as Israel was from all the world (Exod. iv. 22). They are in possession of the birthright. They are partakers with Christ in all the privileges of that right of primogeniture which properly and essentially belongs to him alone. He is “God’s Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things” (Heb. i. 2). But in his inheritance he is not to be alone, as he is not to be alone in what is the ground of it—namely, his filial relation to the Father. It is the Father’s purpose that the Son shall have partners in that relation, and in its fruit (Rom. viii. 16, 17, 29).

These then are “the first-born.” As such, they are

“written in heaven.” The peculiar privileges belonging to the first-born in Israel, as well as the peculiar right of property which the Lord claimed in them, made it necessary that an accurate register of them should be kept (Num. iii. 40). And so also there is a complete register kept of the first-born in Christ. They are written or enrolled in heaven. This is their joy, that their names are written in heaven (Luke x. 20). This is their security also, when all that dwell upon the earth are worshipping the beast, except those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev. xiii. 8). And it is their passport of admission at last into the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 27).

Such is the company here convened, at the foot of the heavenly Sion, and in the presence of the holy angels, on one side of the President, who is God the Judge of all. They are convened as a company at once comprehensive and select;—comprehensive, for it is a “general assembly” (πανηγύρει); select, for it is a “church” (ἐκκλησίᾳ). Both of these expressions are here used in their primary meaning, to denote, not a permanent association so much as a particular gathering; a meeting called for a purpose, and on an occasion. In this view, the one expression—“general assembly”—brings out the wide and universal character of the meeting: it is a meeting of the entire body referred to. The other expression—“church”—implies selection. The meeting is exclusive as well as comprehensive. It is not open to a



promiscuous crowd. It embraces all "the first-born who are written in heaven," but it shuts out others. All friends are here ; but only friends. The whole family is admitted ; but strangers must withdraw.

2. On the other side of the presiding Judge stands another company, designated as "the spirits of just men made perfect." Who are they ? Not, as I apprehend, the pious dead generally, but a particular class of the departed people of God. I take them to be the collective body of the Old Testament saints, as I take "the first-born which are written in heaven" to be the entire household of New Testament believers. And I ground this opinion on two expressions which occur in the previous part of the passage, beginning at the end of the tenth chapter, of which the last verses of this twelfth chapter are the close.

The first is the intimation at the outset, "The just shall live by faith" (x. 38). Starting from that great principle, the writer goes on to define the faith by which the just live, and to give historical instances in illustration. So he ushers in his noble catalogue, in the eleventh chapter, of the grand old worthies of the olden time. For that eleventh chapter, which should not be separated from the last two verses of the tenth, is simply an appeal to the example of "the just who lived by faith" before gospel times ; and virtually, under chosen specimens, it includes them all.

Now let the summing up of the glorious list be noted, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise : God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (xi. 39, 40). Plainly the writer points to some drawback or disadvantage connected with their Old Testament state ; and just as plainly he points to its complete removal through their becoming in some way partakers of some New Testament privilege. "They without us," or apart from us, were "not made perfect." This may mean merely in general that,—as "our eyes see and our ears hear what many prophets and righteous men of old desired to see and to hear but were not permitted,"—so they also now see and hear all that ; and rejoice therefore with us in the actual accomplishment of the great redemption, which was only imperfectly revealed to them in prophecy, type, and figure. I am persuaded, however, that the meaning is more pointed and precise. Especially taking into account the remarkable phraseology of our present text,—distinguishing between "the first-born written in heaven" and "the spirits of just men made perfect,"—I conceive the imperfection attaching to the condition of Old Testament saints to have been just this, that till Christ came, they were not and could not be put in possession of the full blessedness implied in the sonship and heirship of "the first-born written in heaven."

It is to me a strong confirmation of this view, that it harmonises so thoroughly with the representation given in the Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 1-7) of the state of pupilage in which Old Testament believers were, as contrasted with the higher and freer filial standing of Christians. The difference is made to turn mainly on the mission of the Son, as the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of the Son. In virtue of the Son being "made of a woman, made under the law," "the redemption from the curse of the law," which "the just who lived by faith" saw and embraced afar off, is now complete. And in virtue of its having been none other than "his Son" whom "God sent forth when the fulness of the time was come," "we receive the adoption of sons," and "God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Is not this that "better thing which God hath prepared for us, that they without us should not be made perfect?" And is not the description—"the spirits of just men made perfect" an intimation that they have come to share with us in that better thing now?

Thus, then, it appears that the perfection of the state of believers under the gospel, as contrasted with the imperfection of the state of believers under the law, consists in their adoption as the sons of God, or

cipation with Christ in his filial relation to the Father, being more fully developed and

realised; more distinctly indicated on the part of God, and more thoroughly apprehended, felt, and acted out by themselves. The difference, in fact, turns upon the sense and recognition of the sonship and the birthright. New Testament believers are "the first-born written in heaven," in all the extent and fulness of significancy that can belong to these expressions; as such they ought to feel and live always; and as such, in particular, they are convened in this great assize. And of this very privilege their predecessors, the Old Testament saints, are now partakers. Whatever imperfection, in respect of the development and realisation of their sonship, might mark their spiritual state on earth, before the actual manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, is all now at an end. The wall of partition is broken down. And when the souls of these righteous ones who lived by faith are summoned to attend the wondrous meeting at which all the first-born are assembled before their God and Judge, it is not now any inferior or defective position that they occupy. They come forth as "the spirits of just men made perfect." They are "complete in Christ."

III. (Ver. 24.) In so august an audience, in such near contact with God the judge of all, the assembled company need and welcome a mediator and his mediation.

1. The mediator is Jesus. The mediator at Sinai was Moses, who said,—“so terrible was the sight,”—



"I exceedingly fear and quake." The mediator here is "Jesus," who, "in the days of his flesh," cried, "Now is my soul troubled"—"Now is my soul sorrowful even unto death." The terror of Sinai fell chiefly on Moses, as the mediator then between Israel and Israel's God and Judge. A terror still more overwhelming falls upon Jesus, the mediator now, not on Sinai but on Zion, between those to whom he is "the first-born among many brethren," and that "God, the judge of all, before whom they stand." And through this greater terror, he is the "mediator of the new covenant." From Sinai, through the mediation of Moses, the law was given; uncompromising in its claims and unrelenting in its penalties. From Zion, through the mediation of Jesus, the law is given; satisfied in its highest claims, and exhausted in its sternest penalties, by his own work of love. From Sinai, at the hands of Moses, the law is given by a thundering voice, as a rule of life authoritatively enforced from without. From Zion, at the hands of Jesus, the law is given moreover by the power of the living Spirit, as a principle of life energetically working within.

2. The mediation is the sprinkling of blood, or "the blood of sprinkling." And of that blood it is said that "it speaketh better things than that of Abel." I do not think that there is here any reference to what the Lord says in reply to Cain's impious defiance, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground!"

That cry is assumed to be a cry for vengeance, like the cry of the souls under the altar (Rev. vi. 10); and with the cry for vengeance Christ's peace-speaking "blood of sprinkling" is supposed to be contrasted. But it is not quite clear that there is any cry for vengeance in the case at all. What is meant may be, and probably is, not that there is a cry for vengeance against Cain's life, but that there is a cry of witness against his lie. God makes inquisition for blood—Where is Abel thy brother? And the audacious falsehood of Cain's reply, "I know not,"—is refuted by the "poor dumb voice" of his brother's "wounds" speaking for him. Besides, even if we take the cry of Abel's blood to be a cry for vengeance, the introduction of it on the occasion of this great convention is unseasonable. To say of the atoning blood of Christ, that it speaks better things than blood crying for vengeance, is to pay it a poor compliment at the best.

It is far more to the purpose to understand the writer as referring,—either to the blood which Abel shed, when "by faith he offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain" (xi. 4),—or to the testimony which Abel bears, concerning the efficacy of that sacrifice which by faith he offered. This last is probably the real meaning. It is in accordance with the exact words of the passage: "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than Abel." And it fits in, by a natural allusion, to what has previously been said concerning Abel (xi. 4), that, with special refer-

ence to the sacrifice which by faith he offered, "he being dead, yet speaketh." He is the first of the old Testament worthies celebrated in the eleventh chapter, and introduced into the scene now before us as "the spirits of just men made perfect." He leads the van of that noble army of martyrs—"the cloud of witnesses compassing us about." And he does so, because he is the first on record to seal his faith in the necessity and efficacy of an atoning sacrifice for sin. He acted on that faith when he offered as his sacrifice, not "the first fruits of the ground" as a mere expression of gratitude, but "the firstlings" of his flock as a propitiation for guilt. He suffered for that faith when he fell under his brother's envious hand. He died a martyr to the great truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (ix. 22) ; and of this precise truth, "he being dead yet speaketh."

But how inadequately can he speak of it ! How vague and indistinct is any voice his offering or his martyrdom can utter, in comparison with that "blood of sprinkling" which "speaks" now ! Abel's testimony, embodied in the act he performed and confirmed by the death he died, speaks of guilt expiated and the guilty soul cleansed, only in a figure, through the slaying of a lamb, a mere senseless animal, that could never be a worthy substitute for the criminal at God's bar ; "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But the blood of sprinkling now, the precious "blood of Jesus Christ

the Son of God which cleanseth from all sin," speaks better things. It speaks not of redemption typically represented, but of redemption actually accomplished—not of a figurative, but of a real atonement—not of "sanctifying" or cleansing "to the purifying of the flesh," but of "the purging of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 13, 14).

Thus understood, the introduction of this "blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than Abel," is suitable and seasonable as regards the comparison or contrast between Sinai and Zion. In the scene at Sinai there was blood of sprinkling; for only by the use of blood could the people be sanctified according to the Lord's command. (Exod. xix. 10, 14). The blood of sprinkling, however, then employed could speak only as Abel speaks. It was of the same nature with Abel's sacrifice, and could speak no better things. But the blood of sprinkling that is available here, at the foot and within the precincts of Mount Zion—the blood that is to fit and qualify for an approach, not to a tangible burning mountain, but to a glorious spiritual city—that blood speaks assuredly better things by far. It speaks of a sufficient ransom for condemned and depraved men found and provided by the living God himself. It speaks of the ratification of a better covenant, founded upon better promises. It speaks of the removal of the whole burden of guilt from the conscience, and the whole pollution of sin from the heart. And it so speaks of these better things as to



unite in one the two companies on the right and on the left of "God, their common judge,"—"the first-born registered in heaven" and "the spirits of just men made perfect." All now are one, invested with the same sonship, sprinkled with the same blood.

Now, having examined the several particulars of the scene, let us combine them in one whole. Let us take a general view of the picture. The veil of sense is withdrawn, and what does the eye of faith see?

Not "the mount that might be touched," but one that can be only spiritually discerned—on which no hand can as yet be laid, and no foot may tread. It is Mount Zion. But it is Mount Zion more "beautiful for situation" than ever Israelite's fond gaze beheld her—"the joy," not "of the whole earth" merely, but of the whole heaven—"the city of the great King." For the mountain is not like Sinai, lifting its dark and frowning head over the dreary wilderness. The heavenly Jerusalem crowns its summit and sweeps along its skirts. And instead of burning fire she has "the glory of God. And her light is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. xxi. 11).

At the base of this glorious mount,—not yet entering the heavenly city but assembled near it,—what a group meets our view! On one side, there is the whole vast multitude of those who, under the dispensation of the gospel, receive the adoption of sons.

They are brought together in holy convocation to meet their God—to meet him as their Lawgiver, King, and Judge. On the other side we see,—associated with them in fullest sympathy and on a footing of entire equality,—the glorious company of those who walked by faith under an imperfect dispensation, but to whose state imperfection attaches now no more. Myriads of angels are assembled as deeply interested spectators,—occupying the surrounding heights, and intently watching the procedure.

The real transaction, however, is between the people met below the Mount beside the City, and the Being before whom they stand. The transaction is through a mediator; who has on the one hand a covenant to promulgate on the part of God, and on the other hand blood to sprinkle on the people. He comes from God to the people with tables in his grasp on which are inscribed the exact terms of the law. But it is the law satisfied, magnified, and honoured, by his own infinitely meritorious righteousness; the law, moreover, now to be transferred, in that new aspect of it, into the sinner's heart, and made part and parcel of his very nature as renewed by the Holy Ghost. Thus the Mediator comes from God to the people, proposing to them, not a legal covenant which must condemn, but a gracious covenant which saves. And then, to bring the people near to God, he has blood to sprinkle on them—aton-ing blood. For this end “he has received of the

Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.” And this sprinkling of such blood by such an agency,—this application of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit,—speaks of what no other service or sacrifice could promise. It speaks of peace with God, peace of conscience, “peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

This, then, is the scene. Clearly enough it is for the present ideal and spiritual ;—to be apprehended by faith. But it concerns us deeply to apprehend the scene as real. It must be matter of personal experience with us ; spiritual, but not the less on that account real. For it is said, “Ye are come to it.”

There are three applications of which, as it seems to me, these words admit.

1. The first is that which is more immediately suggested by the language “Ye are come.” Your coming to Mount Zion bears the same relation to your exodus and entering into rest that the coming of the Israelites to Sinai did to theirs. Instantly on their being brought out of Egypt, God summoned the Israelites to meet him at Sinai. He had a solemn business to transact with them ; he had to declare to them his covenant. It was a gracious covenant, if they had been able so to understand it ; it was ordained in the hands of a faithful mediator ; and it was not without blood of sprinkling for the sins of the people. A transaction of this sort was a fitting

sequel to the exodus. And it was also a fitting preliminary to the command, "Go up and possess the land." The redeemed stood before their redeeming God as their lawgiver, king, and judge—to know the terms on which they were to be with him. It was meet that there should be this understanding before they set out on their march to Canaan.

Now, if the New Testament Church were to be saved by some such wholesale deliverance as this, its members might be led out thus to meet their God ; —to be dealt with collectively by him and to receive his instructions. That, however, is not the Gospel method. Individually, by a separate process in each mind, a distinct spiritual change in every soul, God effects the rescue of his people. There cannot, therefore, be any general gathering together, in a literal sense, such as there was at Sinai. But practically, in a real though spiritual sense, every converted soul has to pass through an analogous spiritual crisis. It is a momentous crisis, as regards both the exodus and the pilgrimage ; the escape he has made and the way he has to go. It is, in fact, the settlement, once for all, of the terms upon which he is henceforth to be with God as his Sovereign Lord. It is his being confronted and brought face to face with God, in a new state and character, as redeemed by his grace and ready for his work.

Let the believer place himself in this position on his first closing with Christ. Let him know and feel



what it means. Has he been rescued from the city of destruction? Then, his first step is to come to this Mount Zion. What a scene to come to! There is the holy hill of God, and the city of the Lord, the heavenly Jerusalem. There are angels in countless throng, rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth, ready to minister to him as an heir of salvation; and the holy men of old, from Abel downwards, "of whom the world was not worthy;" and all the faithful in Christ Jesus, from the dying thief and the martyr Stephen, on to the last saint that is to be translated to glory. That is an august enough assemblage, fitted to strike him down to the ground with deepest awe. But, looking up, what does he see? Or, rather, whom? "God the judge of all!" Does he tremble—a man of unclean lips, seeing the King, the Lord of Hosts? Does he fall down as one dead? Let the Mediator minister to him the promises of the covenant of grace. Let him sprinkle him afresh with atoning blood. He stands erect among the first-born.

But hark! a voice! Before he leaves the presence, God speaks these words: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; thou shalt have none other gods before me." Thus, "out of Zion goes forth the law." And other words he speaks, words of greater love and of more quickening power; the words of "the better covenant, established upon better promises" (Heb. viii. 6-12).

Speak on, Lord, will not the believer say? for thy servant heareth. Speak thy whole mind. Let there be here, and now, in this dread audience, an entire adjustment of thy claims and my obligations. And let me not leave the holy mountain until, a thorough understanding being established between thee and me, I am ready for going up to take possession of the inheritance in face of all enemies, with the light of thy countenance shining upon me, and thy love shed abroad in my heart through the Holy Ghost being given unto me.

2. Another application of this phrase, "ye are come," may be allowed. You are come to this scene, and here you remain. You draw near; you live near. To what? and to whom? To the holy Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem; your conversation is in heaven. To holy angels and perfected saints;—not in the way of conscious fellowship between them and you, but yet really;—angels receiving charge over you to keep you, and the saints of old all testifying to you how, even in a state far less perfect than yours, they found it no vain thing to serve the Lord, and never once regretted that they had walked as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. To "God the judge of all;" a reconciled God, but your ruler still, your King and Lord;—all the more entitled to rule over you and judge you, because he has made you as his "first-born,"—partakers of the very love he bears to his own Son, and the very inheritance of all things

to which he has appointed him. To Jesus, ever discharging as Mediator his double office, ministering to you the new covenant, and sprinkling you with atoning blood. Is this indeed our spiritual standing and life? Then, what reason is there for continual fear and trembling; for surely the place where we stand is holy. It is in solemn circumstances that God is ever speaking to us when he brings us in such a way so near to himself. And "if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (ver. 25).

3. There is still one other application of the scene which is surely not inadmissible. It is all matter of faith with us now. But is it not one day to become matter of sense? It is spiritually apprehended now. Is it not to be literally and actually realised at last? (Rev. xxi. 2, 3). The shaking of the earth at Sinai indicated the introduction of a new economy. The shaking, not of the earth only, but also of the heaven, which the apostle connects with the scene on Zion, indicated a revolution more complete. All temporal and typical ordinances were superseded. Things capable of being shaken passed away. Room was made for the bringing in of "things that remain,"—"the kingdom that cannot be moved" (ver. 27, 28). This kingdom "we now receive." But we receive it only spiritually and by faith. Our capital, our fellow-subjects, our king, are all unseen. All, however,

are to be visible at last. The God of glory appears. Angels, the church of the first-born, the worthies of the olden time—all severally indebted to Christ, as their Saviour, cease not to celebrate his praise day and night. Let us hopefully anticipate this blessed gathering. Let us believingly taste, even now, its blessedness, as well as its solemnity. Receiving now by “faith,” as we are to receive actually at last, the “kingdom which cannot be moved,” “let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For even our God is a consuming fire” (ver. 28, 29).



### III.

#### THE SON CALLING HIS PEOPLE BRETHREN.

“For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.”—HEB. ii. 11-13.

THERE is probably an allusion in this passage to the condition which the Jewish law annexed to the right of redemption. The redeemer must be a kinsman of the party whose person or whose property was to be redeemed (Lev. xxv. 25, 48, 49). This condition was doubtless designed to guard against fraud, and to secure that the interference with the ordinary course of law which the right of redemption implied was really, in good faith, an act of grace. When, therefore, the Son undertakes the office of redeemer on our behalf, he must be in a position to claim kindred with us. That is not his original position. As the Son, he is the Father’s “fellow ;” not ours. But he becomes our fellow, our kinsman. And he does so even though it involves his taking our place under the law which we have broken ; answering for us in the judgment ; sanctifying or cleansing us by his blood. “For which cause,” in respect of his so thoroughly identify-

ing himself with us, and making common cause with us, "he is not ashamed to call us brethren." It is a strong expression. He is not ashamed, because his calling us brethren is more than a bare verbal acknowledgment or formal salutation: it involves the conferring of real brotherly benefits.\*

It is to confirm this view that the three texts from the Old Testament are introduced. It is to show not only that the Messiah does call his people brethren, but that there is no reason why he should be ashamed to do so. It is to prove,—not only generally that this relation of brotherhood between Christ and his people is asserted in Scripture,—but in particular that it is asserted in such a way as to make it not nominal merely, but substantial and real.

I. The first passage quoted is from the twenty-second Psalm,—a psalm which is strictly Messianic. It is literally fulfilled in the sufferings of Christ and the glory which followed. It is Christ himself; not of course Christ standing alone and apart from his Church; but Christ representing his people and taking them all to be his body;—it is he who speaks; first in his agony (ver. 1-21), and then in his triumph (ver. 22-31). And the beginning of his triumph is the verse here cited. The first fruit of his victory is, that it places him in the best and most favourable position for "declaring his Father's name unto his brethren," so that "in the midst of the church or con-

\* See, for similar phraseology, Heb. xi. 10.

gregation" composed of them "he may praise the Father." This is no new purpose with him; he has been all along, in all his earthly ministry, keeping it in view; as he says to the Father, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." "I will declare it;" for at this crisis, when he is passing from his finished work to its reward,—he can say, as he could not fully say before, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren."

Yes! "Unto my brethren!" The emphasis lies there. And accordingly, as a simple historical fact, it is worthy of notice that it is after his resurrection that Jesus for the first time uses this expression concerning his disciples,—*"my brethren."*\* To the women the risen Saviour says, "Go, tell my brethren." To Mary he says, "Go to my brethren and say." How is this to be explained?

In the first place, Jesus now enters upon that state in which he can fully declare the Father's name. He can now unfold the character of God his Father in a light in which it could never before be adequately

\* I do not consider the Lord's reply to those who told him of his mother and his brethren standing outside of the crowd, desiring to speak with him, as at all a parallel or equivalent instance (Matt. xii. 48, 50). Evidently the Lord means nothing more than that the moral and spiritual tie which binds him to all his Father's obedient subjects, is stronger and more sacred than any mere family bond, however close and tender. There is nothing special in the expression "my brethren" or "my brother,"—any more than there is in the expressions "my sister" or "my mother."

seen ; and he can thus raise in the church a new song of praise. Never before, never otherwise, could the name of God—his nature, his character, his mind and heart, as the Righteous Father—be so declared as the Son is now in a position to declare it. He can declare it fully and effectually. He can declare it fully ; for he can declare it as it shines forth, in all its light and love, in himself personally, and in his work now finished and accepted. He can declare it effectually ; for he has received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost to teach his people all things. Hence the propriety of the profession coming from his lips now, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.”

But, secondly, this is not all. There is a still closer connection to be traced between the Lord’s calling his people his brethren and his declaring to them the Father’s name. It is not simply said,—they are my brethren, because I declare unto them thy name ; but I declare thy name unto them as my brethren. Their being my brethren is the condition and the means of my declaring unto them thy name ; not otherwise could I do so. For the discoveries which I have to make to them concerning thee, O righteous Father, are such as I cannot make to any who are not my brethren. They must occupy the same position that I occupy, and be one with me, as my brethren, in my relation to thee and my acquaintance with thee. They must see thee from the same point of view from which I see thee. They must come to



know thee by the very same sort of experience of thy love by which I know thee. I must have them to be my brethren, if I am to declare unto them thy name.

For this name of God the righteous Father,—his essential nature, as the righteous Father,—the holy love that is in his heart, as the righteous Father,—never can be known at second hand. Even the Son cannot make us know it, except by making us one with himself in his own personal, experimental, loving knowledge of the Father, in whose bosom he dwells. So he himself tells us, as I think, on three different occasions.

1. (John i. 18.) “No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” But how has he declared him? Not merely through his “dwelling among us, full of grace and truth” (14); but through our “receiving of his fulness, even grace for grace” (16); grace answering and corresponding to his grace; the very grace of which he is full, as “the only begotten Son dwelling in the bosom of the Father.” It is as dwelling himself in the bosom of the Father that he sees the Father; so sees him as to be able to declare him to us. And it is by making us partakers of his own grace,—by causing us to dwell, as he himself dwells, in the bosom of the Father,—by embracing us in his own filial oneness with the Father and filial fellowship with the Father,—it is thus that he declares to us the Father.

2. (Matt. xi. 27.) "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." And to whom is it the Son's pleasure to reveal the Father? To whom but to "the babes" to whom the Father himself reveals "the things which he has hid from the wise and prudent?" And these babes—Are they not the new-born babes, the little children, who alone can see the kingdom of God? They are those whom, as born again,—born like himself of the Spirit,—Jesus may call his brethren. As such, they are placed by him in the very same position of advantage for knowing the Father which properly belongs to himself alone. None can know the Father but the Son, and those "new-born babes," to whom, by making them his brethren in his sonship, the Son reveals the Father.

3. (John xvii. 25, 26.) "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." Sad, but not strange. How should the world, lying in the wicked one and estranged from the Father, know him, so as to enter into his mind and heart, understand his real character, and do him justice in judging of his ways? Is there no one then to whom the Father can look? none to know, to understand, to sympathise with him? "I have known thee," says the Son of his love. And not only have I known thee. There are others who have "known that thou hast sent me." To them "I have declared thy name," and will yet more fully "declare it." "For the love wherewith thou hast

loved me," and whereby I have known thee, shall "be in them, and I in them."

Thus the Son undertakes to declare the Father's name to those whom in virtue of his incarnation, his obedience, his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection,—all on their behalf,—he is not ashamed to call his brethren.

And it is "in the midst of the church or congregation" composed of them, that he now praises the Father. "I will praise thee," he says to the Father. But not alone and apart,—as if I only, rightly knowing thee, could worthily praise thee. I have now got a church or congregation of brethren with whom I can associate myself, and in the midst of whom I can praise thee.

The praise is on account of prayer answered and signal deliverance experienced. "I will praise thee," I who but yesterday "made supplication, with strong crying and tears." The sharp cry of agony is changed into the triumphant language of praise; praise, however, not as for myself alone. These, the congregation of my brethren, are interested in the deliverance on account of which I have to praise thee;—in what way, and with what depth and intensity, they will begin to understand and feel when I fully "declare unto them thy name." But for that, they would be incapable of any sympathy with me, either in my song of praise, or in the terrible experience that preceded and evoked it; and I must go apart and be

alone in my joy, as much as I once was in my grief. In the garden they all slept ;—on the cross, they all forsook me and fled. They could not go with me into my sufferings ; they could not enter into the meaning of my shame and sorrow. To call them, in these circumstances, brethren,—to expect them as brethren to sympathise with me,—would scarcely have been reasonable or fair. I might have been ashamed then to call them brethren. And in point of fact, I had to make allowance for them, as for a feeble flock, in whom the spirit was willing but the flesh weak ; the scattered sheep of a smitten shepherd ; to be pitied rather than to be blamed. But it is not so now. I have declared, and will more fully declare, unto them thy name. I give them such a discovery of thy character, such an insight into thy heart, O righteous Father, as casts a flood of light on all that I have had to do and to suffer on the earth. The evil of earth's sin—the awful justice of heaven—the dread reality of an atoning sacrifice—the shedding of blood for the expiation of guilt—the substitution of the holy one in the room of the guilty and the laying of their iniquities upon him ;—all this they can now enter into and sympathise with, whatever might be their inability before. And therefore, also, in the joy and triumph which follow upon the anguish ended and the victory achieved, they can now with heart and soul participate. I need not now be solitary in the utterance of my thankful acknowledg-



ments, O righteous Father. I have brethren who now at last can go along with me and be one with me, first in my agony and then in my triumph. There is a congregation now gathered around me; the congregation of those to whom as my brethren I declare thy name. In the midst of that congregation, and carrying their full sympathy along with me, I now, O righteous Father, will praise thee.

Surely, on such terms, the Son need not be ashamed to call us brethren.

II. The propriety of the second reason why Christ is not ashamed to call his disciples brethren, is not at first sight very apparent. The saying quoted, "I will put my trust in him," may be found in more than one Old Testament Messianic passage. I am inclined to regard it as a sort of general reference;—though it may with great probability be accepted as a version of that word of Isaiah, in the chapter to which the next quotation refers, "I will wait upon the Lord" (v. iii. 17). That certainly is equivalent to "I will put my trust in him."

But the more material question is; how does our Lord's use of that, or of any similar language, prove that he is not, and need not be, ashamed to call his disciples brethren?

Plainly such language—"I will wait upon the Lord,"—or "I will put my trust in him,"—cannot possibly be the expression of any sentiment or feeling proper

to the original and everlasting relation subsisting between the Father and the Son. Never, at any time, could the coequal and coeternal Son, with reference to his own divine nature, as one of the Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity, thus speak of the Father. That he should be found in a position to use such language is an instance of wonderful condescension. And that he should use it in a position of oneness with us,—as regards our state of dependence upon God and the necessity of our continually exercising trust in God,—is indeed a proof of his conferring upon us so great and substantial a benefit as may well make him not ashamed to call us brethren.

“I will put my trust in him.” Is not this the motto and grand heading of the entire human life of the Saviour? Is not this the spirit and embodiment of his whole conduct here below? He did not live by the exercise of his own prerogative or power, but as other men, by bread, or whatever God might be pleased to ordain. His miracles were not done to support or relieve himself. As to all that was personal to himself—what he was to eat and drink—wherewithal he was to be clothed—where he was to lay his head;—as to all his personal experience, and especially as to all he had to suffer from first to last;—he had the very same occasion for the exercise of trust, or faith, that we have amid the anxieties and perplexities of our utmost helplessness and want. And was not this faith on his part sufficiently put to the test? Was

not the extent to which he could go in saying—"I will put my trust in him,"—thoroughly tried and proved! And is he not therefore well entitled to call us his brethren, and to ask us as his brethren to learn of him? Can we ever be in circumstances in which it can be more hard for us to say, "I will put my trust in God," than it was for him, in the wilderness, in the garden, on the cross?

And let us remember that the very fact of his having power to deliver himself must be regarded as enhancing the severity of such trial of his faith, and so enabling him all the more to sympathise with us in the trial of our faith. The consciousness of his being able, by a mere word, to extricate himself out of all his troubles, must be taken into account as an element of aggravation, when we see him willing to face them all—naked as we are—dependent as we are—submissive as he would have us to be—in the spirit of implicit resignation and reliance,—“I will put my trust in God.”

Surely he is one who need not be ashamed to call us brethren! He is indeed a brother—a brother born for adversity! He is our brother, being our companion in tribulation!

Hast thou a struggle, O poor soul, in saying “I will put my trust in him?” So had he. Thou hast brotherhood with him in thy struggle. Hear his loud cry; “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this

cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name" (John xii. 27, 28).

Ah! this language of acquiescent and submissive reliance,—“I will put my trust in him,”—has a peculiar pathos and power imparted to it, when it is used as language in the use of which we have brotherhood with Jesus. For it is because he has been in a position to use that language himself,—and knows how hard it often is to use it,—that he is not ashamed to call us brethren. We imagine sometimes that this trust in God—this willingness to leave all that concerns us to God—ought to be always an easy and almost spontaneous exercise of soul with one who really knows the Father's name, and has got such cause to praise him as we have got. But who knows the Father as the Son? Who praises the Father as the Son? And yet he, in the days of his flesh, found it difficult enough to say, “I will put my trust in him.” It cost him “prayers and supplications, strong crying and tears.” Why should we count it strange if it cost us the like? Rather let us be thankful that on this very account he is not ashamed to call us brethren, because at the very worst, in our utmost extremity,—when we find it the hardest of all efforts to say “Thy will be done,” “I will trust in thee,”—he can, as a brother, understand our case, and enter into it. He can bring his own personal experience forward for our encouragement. He can meet us as a brother in every trial; and ever as he meets us, and has fellowship with



us as a brother, he can give us courage, with whatever struggle, to murmur,—“I will trust and not be afraid,” “Though he slay me I will trust in him.”

III. The third reason given for Christ's not being ashamed to call us brethren is founded on a passage in Isaiah (viii. 18), which is apt to be misunderstood, both as it stands there, and as it is quoted here. It is given substantially in the same words by the prophet and the apostle ; “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.”

This text, as cited in Hebrews, is sometimes held to be an instance of our Lord's calling us his children. But he is never represented as sustaining that relation to his people ;—not at least in any other sense than that in which Abraham is said to have a seed. And at any rate his being so represented here would be quite foreign to the writer's argument, and, indeed, inconsistent with it. Even as used by the prophet originally, the saying has no reference to his own children, though some have so applied it. It has a far higher import, as will be seen if its connection is considered.

The prophet is describing the times in which he lives. There is a general confederacy for evil among the people ; they associate themselves in defiance of the Lord. Are there none found faithful among the faithless ? Yes, replies this man of God ;—“I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him” (ver. 1).

Nor am I alone. I have brethren willing to be fellow-witnesses and, if need be, fellow-victims with me ; “ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion.”

Such obviously is the meaning of the words, as originally uttered by Isaiah. And such also is their meaning when put into the mouth of the Messiah. “ Behold I and the children,”—the little ones,—“whom thou hast given me ;”—given me to be my brethren. Thus viewed the language expresses intense filial and brotherly affection.

How lovingly does the elder brother speak of them to the Father, using the language of most tender endearment. They are the little ones—the children. As such I love them, and delight to have them as my brethren. I have revealed to them things hidden from the wise and prudent ; I have declared to them thy name. They are the congregation in the midst of which I rejoice to praise thee ; for “ out of the mouth of babes and sucklings I have perfected praise.” I teach them to put their trust in thee, as I have done, O righteous Father. Then how dear are these little ones to their Elder Brother, as given to him by his Father ; given to him in covenant from everlasting ;—given to him in right, as bought with his blood ;—given to him in reality, being born of the Spirit, in some sort as he was himself ! With what overflowing fullness of love,—the love of a true son and a true brother,

—does he present them to the Father ! They are mine—these children—these little ones ; mine, by thine own gift, O Father. “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” Be to them what thou art to me ; not indeed as thou hast been to me from everlasting, but as thou art to me now ;—now that I have become one with them ; now that they have become one with me.

Thus he presents the little ones as his brethren to the Father. And for what end ? Certainly, in the first instance, it is for present work and warfare on the earth (Isaiah viii. 18). They are to be jointly with himself “for signs and for wonders.” Thou art not to be without signs, O righteous Father ;—without witnesses of thy character and purposes and plans, in the world which knoweth thee not. Here am I for one. And here also are these, the little ones whom thou has given me ; whom I scruple not to associate with myself in this office. For I have fitted and qualified them, as my brethren, for it. I have given them the very knowledge which I have myself of thy glorious name. I have put my own song of praise into their lips. I have made them partakers with myself in that grace of simple trust which carried me safely through the pains and perils of my witness-bearing. They are willing to be “for signs.” And “for wonders” too. They are willing and able, by the help of the blessed Spirit, to be a very world’s wonder ; to bear reproach, obloquy, persecution ;

to seal, as I have done, their testimony with their blood.

But we need not limit this gracious presentation to the present scene of trial. We may carry forward our view to the day when the Lord Jesus shall appear, "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." At that day it will be seen that he has indeed no cause to be ashamed to call us brethren ;—that he has well sustained a brother's character, and well performed a brother's duty ; that he has kept back nothing of his Father's light or his Father's love from us ; that he has upheld us by his sympathy in the same faith which upheld himself ; and that at last he presents us to the Father, as having been fellow-witnesses with him of the Father's grace, to be fellow-heirs with him of the Father's glory



## IV.

### THE SON LEARNING OBEDIENCE BY SUFFERING.

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”—  
HEB. v. 7-9.

THE Lord Jesus is here set before us, first, as passing through a painful experience ; secondly, as by means of that experience learning a necessary lesson ; and thirdly, as thus becoming qualified to bestow on his obedient people all saving benefits. The experience through which he passes is described not so much in its nature as in its effects. We see the meek and holy sufferer offering up “prayers and supplications.” And these are of no ordinary kind ; they are accompanied by “strong crying and tears” (ver. 7). And if the question is asked,—Why is that sinless one subjected to such an afflictive discipline?—is there anything he needs to acquire at such a cost?—there is a key to the mystery. Son as he is, he has to “learn obedience by the things which he suffers ;” and so to “be made perfect.” Nor is this all. The gracious end for which he is to learn that lesson and

to acquire that perfection is not left to be conjectured. It is that he may "become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."

The learner, the lesson, the result or issue—all demand our serious and attentive study ;—but chiefly the lesson.

Who and what is the learner? A son; the Son. Can he be a learner simply as the Son? Is he not joined with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the undivided essence of the Godhead, in the mysterious fellowship and mutual relationship of the Trinity, and in all the purpose of the divine mind, specially with reference to the ordering of the everlasting covenant? Thus essentially one with the Father in nature, and thus intimately related to the Father in person, the Eternal Son can learn no lesson of obedience. It is his incarnation that renders him capable of doing so, "Being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient" (Phil. ii. 6-8). In his state of humiliation he learned obedience. And he learned it by becoming obedient even "unto death ;" and that death no ordinary one, but "the death of the cross ;" death, with the sting of sin and the curse of the broken law. He learned it, in a word, "by the things which he suffered."

For, even when incarnate, how could he without suffering have learned it? Let the Incarnate Son, uniting now in his own person the two distinct natures, the divine and the human, and the two dis-

tinct relations, that of a son and that of a servant,—be placed as Adam was in a sinless and sorrowless garden, under no other obligation than that of conformity to the law, which is his own as well as the Father's. How could he in that condition have in any proper sense learned obedience? He would have been holy, no doubt; holiness immaculate and inviolable, stainless and serene, would have characterised his whole moral being. But it could scarcely have been holiness having in it anything of the element of obedience. Introduce however the circumstance of suffering, and of such suffering. Bring this holy one into contact with the results of sin realised on earth, and place him under the responsibilities of sin registered in heaven. Let his life be a life of suffering—of suffering, too, judicial and penal—having in it the bitter ingredients of imputed guiltiness and inflicted wrath. Then truly that God-man is in a position to learn obedience. And the more intense his sense of his filial relationship is, and the more inviolable his holiness, so much the more complete must be the lesson; so much the more thoroughly must we regard him as, “though he were a son, yet learning obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Such being the learner, what now is the manner of the lesson?

Here, at the very outset, let the character which the Son bore and the position in which he stood, when he was learning obedience by the things which

he suffered, be carefully noted. He bore a representative character ; he stood in the position of the head and surety of redeemed men. It was as the second Adam that he learned obedience. That was the lesson which the first Adam ought to have learned, and failed to learn. And it was his failure that rendered it needful that there should be a second Adam raised up to learn it.

There is here, I think, a great truth—a broad general principle—to be announced. The learning of obedience is an indispensable condition of the creature-state itself, or of the creature-relationship to the Supreme. Any one, whoever he may be, whatever his rank and character among the intelligences of the universe—placed, whether by his own choice or not, in the state of a creature or in the relation in which a creature stands to God—must necessarily learn obedience ; he has it to learn. And he can learn it only by being tried. For it would seem to be of the essence of that most marvellous and awful gift which God has associated with intelligence,—the gift or endowment of free will,—the power of spontaneous choice and action which makes intelligence to the creature so high and yet so hazardous a boon,—that obedience, even to the most rightful and reasonable authority, needs to be learned as a lesson or acquired as a habit. Hence, whoever is constituted the head or representative of mankind must learn that lesson and acquire that habit of obedience.



I. That, therefore, was the appointed task of the first Adam as well as of the second. For it may help us to a right understanding of this whole matter if we consider the principle which I have indicated as applicable, in the first instance, to him. So applied, it may be found to cast some little light on the economy of probation in paradise.

1. Let us note what, as originally made, he had not to learn. Personally and perfectly innocent and upright, Adam had nothing to learn in the way of pure tastes or a benign temper. All within being serenity and peace, and all without harmony and repose—had he been left untutored and untaught—his simple, guiltless, guileless, naked character would have expanded—not by any effort but spontaneously and naturally—into something like that lovely virgin bloom which romantic dreamers have sought to paint as the perfection of uncontaminated humanity. But Adam was not merely an intellectual plant,—or, as it were, mere organised matter, growing or grown into mind. He was a living person, made expressly for personal converse with the living personal God;—made therefore in the image of his Creator;—made after that likeness in respect of high intelligence and holy affections—and above all, in respect of the wondrous faculty of free will. 2. Being so made, what has he to learn? Obedience. Many things, I repeat, he has not to learn. All good dispositions are native to him, and not learned. But obedience is a

habit, and he has to learn it. For the learning of it he must be put to school; and to such a school as shall teach obedience alone, and nothing else; not the things he has already by nature, but the thing he needs to learn; not other good qualities or faculties, but obedience only. 3. In this view, the barer the school the better. The less furniture it has of any sort beyond the mere materials of the single lesson to be learned, the more thoroughly is it fitted to serve the purpose of teaching it. The less there is in it of what appeals to anything the scholar already possesses, the more perfectly may it teach the one thing he has to learn—namely, obedience. 4. Now the school to which man was put was the forbidden tree. All over the garden otherwise he roamed of his own free will;—giving forth the fragrance and shining forth in the grace of his pure and lovely nature;—very much as the plants beneath his feet bloomed into fresh verdure and blossomed into ripe fruit—or as the animals around, in their harmless gambols, gave ever new exhibitions of beauty, gentleness, and love. But beside the forbidden tree he was at school; and as a scholar he had to learn obedience. This indeed was his dignity, as well as his danger. For to be the scholar of God is more than to be the child of nature. And fascinating as is the charm of virgin innocency—yet, had man used the office of scholar well, he would have purchased for himself a still better degree.

It was the best school he could have had for

learning obedience ; for it was a school in which he could learn nothing else. It was not a school in which he could learn intelligence ;—or exercise and quicken his faculties of thought. That benefit he might have in walking with God, and among the works of God, everywhere, over all the garden. But in the school of the forbidden tree there was no dealing with his intelligence at all ; no appeal to his reason ; no attempt to stimulate or satisfy his judgment. Nor was it a school in which he could learn, if he had needed to learn, any good affection of any sort. In God, in one another, in the creatures,—our first parents had ample scope for the indulgence and expansion of all their affections. But in the school of the forbidden tree, the matter upon which the lesson turned had nothing in it with which the affections could deal at all. It was a prohibition and a threat ; neither, on the one hand, justified to man's understanding, as founded on any reason, nor, on the other, coming home in any way to his heart. For it could appeal to no natural sense of propriety, no natural perception of morality, no natural feeling of the sublime, the pathetic, or the honest and good. All the more on that account was it fitted for teaching the single lesson man had to learn, the lesson of obedience.

The very circumstance, therefore, which some have made an objection to this procedure is in fact its highest recommendation. That the trial turned on what might seem so insignificant and arbitrary a

matter as the mere eating or not eating of the fruit of a particular tree, is the very thing that fits it for being the school in which man is to learn obedience. For, in fact, what else can he learn? He cannot learn, for he is not taught, to understand; he cannot learn, for he is not asked to approve; he can only learn to obey. And had he learned his lesson right, he would have passed in due time from that school under the discipline of God here below to some higher home of study in the bosom of God above. He would have been raised from his precarious position of probation, which could not last for ever, to his meet reward in a state of confirmed security;—having acquired the only thing originally wanting to his perfection; having learned,—not to be good, and pure, and holy, which he needed not to learn,—but simply to obey.

This, let it be farther noted, he would have learned in a sense through suffering,—not indeed through the suffering of pain, but through the suffering of patience,—through passive submission, not voluntary action. Nor could he otherwise have learned it. All goodness in him being natural or spontaneous, its exercise, even throughout eternity, never could have taught him this lesson of mere obedience. There must be positive restriction,—the formal and express imposing of constraint—implying, so far, something of the nature of suffering. But “through his suffering,” if he will but suffer so as to learn obedience, he is to be “made perfect.” To the tasteful and graceful, yet perhaps the



somewhat insipid charm of mere natural innocence, there is to be added the sterner and ripper virtue of tried and tested discipleship. The whole character will thus assume a firmer texture. The gentle influence of good affections meeting and coalescing with the more robust staple of habitual obedience to authority, he will come out of the school in which mere submission has been the only lesson,—instructed, improved, accomplished, as a finished scholar, and not merely a self-unfolding and growing child—a man in the full development of proved and consummate manhood.

Such might have been the schooling of man, and such its issue, had he kept his first estate.

II. I return now to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and would try to follow him through some of the actual experiences of that school in which he was placed when he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.

But how shall I venture farther? What particular instances shall I select of this amazing schooling of such a scholar? I can do nothing more than offer a few observations on its general characteristic features.

1. There is this peculiarity running through the whole, that it is still as a Son, or as the Son, that he learns obedience. There is a vivid apprehension, a blessed realising, of his filial relationship to the Father that never leaves him. He veiled indeed the glory of his divine sonship in a tabernacle of

humanity, when he was made flesh and dwelt among us ; but his sonship itself he never laid aside ; the unspeakable thought, of all that from everlasting to everlasting the Father is to him and he to the Father, was never absent from his mind. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” is his prompt reply when called in question for sitting with the Doctors at the age of twelve. It is “his Father’s business” he must be about. So he begins, and so he goes on. Is he charged as a Sabbath-breaker ? “My Father worketh hitherto and I work” (John v. 17) is the reply with which he sustains himself in his obedience to the spirit of the law, against those who could not look beyond the letter. Is he met, when proclaiming himself as the good Shepherd, with that discouraging question of unbelief, “How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly?”—What a sense of his filial oneness with the Father pervades his answer, being evidently, under that trial, the stay of his own soul :—“I and my Father are one” (John x. 30). Is he forced to upbraid the cities wherein his mighty works were done ? Even here, as to this most dark and trying sorrow,—the seeming failure of his ministry,—he learns obedience still as the Son—“I thank thee, O Father ;” “Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matt. xi. 25, 26). In the crisis of his sufferings,—in the garden,—was it otherwise than as a Son that he learned obedience when he uttered so

meekly the words of filial resignation, "Father, thy will be done?" Or finally, as he hangs upon the cross, is it not still as a Son that he learns obedience, when he commends in filial faith, as the Son to his Father, first, the souls of them that slew him, and then his own?—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;"—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

2. But though he was the Son, it was a real obedience that he learned by the things which he suffered. His being the Son did not divest the obedience he had to learn of its true and proper character of obedience; still less did it exempt him, in the learning of it, from its accompanying pain and grief. The very contrary was the effect of his intimate relation of sonship to the Father, and his intimate sense of that relation. It made such obedience as he had to learn all the more painful, and the learning of it all the more trying. For we must remember that as he never, in all his sufferings, lost his apprehension of his filial oneness with the Father, so he never, in any of them, made a stand upon it, as giving him any privilege of exemption, or any power of endurance or escape. This, indeed, was the very temptation of the adversary—to lead him into such a use of his sonship. It was thus that he assailed him when,—immediately after the heavens had been opened at his baptism, and the Holy Ghost had descended upon him like a dove, and a voice from

heaven had proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son"—Jesus was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1-10). For what is the devil's plea? Is it not—"If thou be the Son of God?" All through the three acts of the temptation it is so. (1.) Why should the Son of God suffer hunger, when by the word of his power, as the Son, he has but to speak, and the very stones will become bread? (2.) Why should the Son of God come in lowly guise, as a poor Nazarene, when, as the Son, he may make the summit of his own temple his glorious throne, and summoning the angels to whom the Father gives charge over him, cast himself from its pinnacle, so that on the wings of the winds and in the chariot of the clouds he may be seen making his approach to Israel? (3.) Why, finally, must the Son of God receive his kingdom only after much tribulation, when, at once and immediately, as the Son, he may recover it from the hands of the reigning Prince, on the terms of a single act of courtesy?—surely a very simple compromise! And how did the Lord meet this threefold temptation;—all throughout based upon an appeal to his sonship? Was it not by declining to take advantage of any privilege or prerogative belonging to him as the Son, —either for lightening the pain,—or for covering the shame,—or for abridging the term, of the obedience he had to learn? (1.) He is to live, like any other man, by the providence of God, sustaining life as it



pleases him. (2.) He is to depend on promised help, only in the lowly path of duty as a servant, and not, presuming on his sonship, to tempt the Lord his God. (3.) He is not, as the Son, to act as if he were free to make his own terms with the adversary ; he is to worship the Lord alone, and him only is he to serve.

Thus, from the beginning, Son though he was, he yet learned to obey. And so it was to the end. He might have reckoned, as he tells us, upon his sonship, and claimed deliverance from his final sufferings. What! he says to the over-zealous disciple, who in the garden drew his sword in his defence, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" It was the very cup respecting which he had just been praying in an agony that, if it were possible, it might pass from him. As the Son, he might have prevailed to have it pass from him. But still to the last he persevered in learning obedience ;—"Father, thy will be done!"

3. It was obedience alone that he learned by the things which he suffered ;—it was all he had to learn ; it was all he could learn. No holy lesson was to be taught him by suffering save only the lesson of obedience. There was no lust in him for pain or penance to chastise ; no imperfect and unstable virtue for discipline to strengthen and mature. Suffering could not

add one gracious feature to the consummate moral beauty of his soul ; nor could it be meant to eradicate any root of bitterness, or to quench any hidden flame of desire. Obedience alone was “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” it could yield to him. Hence, through all his sufferings, we find no trace whatever of suffering for mere suffering’s sake ; or suffering self-imposed or self-inflicted ; or suffering to please men or devils ; or suffering, finally, in wanton bravery and defiance of pain. All that he suffered was by the Father’s command, and in execution and accomplishment of the Father’s will. It is undoubtedly true that his sufferings were all, from first to last, voluntary. It was spontaneously, of his own free will, that he gave himself to them all. But still it was in compliance with the Father’s will and for the doing of the Father’s work. It was obedience still, however willing. “No man,” he says, in reference to the crowning instance of his sufferings,—his laying down his life for the sheep,—“No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself ; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” But observe how he instantly and emphatically adds, “This commandment have I received of my Father” (John x. 18).

4. Finally, let it be noted, it was “the obedience” that he thus learned (τὴν ὑπακοήν) ;—the very obedience needed, not for himself, but for the “many sons” he is to “bring unto glory.” It was the obedience which

the first Adam failed to learn that the second Adam learned, by the things which he suffered. The learning of it was not, indeed, by any means so easy, when the second Adam came to repair the damage that the first Adam had done. But the issue is more glorious by far.

Here, in the first place, let us compare, or contrast, the second Adam with the first in the tasks assigned to them respectively. How vast the difference! In the case of the first, if it could be said that obedience was to be learned through suffering at all, it was through suffering without either sin or the sense of sin—through suffering in no way partaking of a judicial character. It was suffering, in short, allowing it to be properly suffering, neither retributive in its purpose, nor severe in its nature. For, as to its design, it was not punitive or penal, but preventive and probative merely,—intended not to punish but to try. And as to its amount, it implied no actual ordination of evil, but the mere withholding of what might seem to be good,—restraint, therefore, merely, and not positive pain. Adam in Paradise would have “learned obedience,” had he simply suffered the abridgment of his absolute discretion, to the extent of abstaining from the forbidden tree. Very different is the task of the second Adam,—the scene of whose discipline and trial is not the school of an unforfeited and unpolluted paradise, but the school of a condemned cell—the residence of prisoners, guilty,

and awaiting execution. The obedience he has to learn, when he takes the place of such criminals, is not mere abstinence from what may condemn them ; —it reaches to the endurance of that actual condemnation which they have all already incurred. In the capacity in which he has to “learn obedience,” he stands as the representative, not of a race that may fall, but of a people already fallen. And he has to “learn obedience,” to the full extent of undertaking all their liabilities, and answering for all their sins.

Ah ! what a burden is it that is thus laid on this Divine learner in the school of suffering ! Not the burden merely of keeping his eye from beholding—his heart from coveting—and his hand from touching—a certain forbidden thing ; but the far, far heavier burden of bearing for us the guilt of that first sin which our original covenant-head, the first Adam, committed,—and of all our sins that have flowed from that dismal source. What did he suffer ? And how, by all that he suffered, did he learn obedience ? He “bore our sins in his own body on the cross.” He was “made sin” and “made a curse” for us. He bared his bosom to the bolt of wrath that should have scathed and destroyed us for ever. And when the Father said, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow !” the answer of the Son was ever the same, “Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God.”

And now therefore, secondly, we may see how



much more precious to us, as well as how much more costly to himself, the attainment of the second Adam is, as compared with what that of the first would have been, even if he had stood. For what comparison can there be between the position we might have occupied, as represented by a mere innocent creature, trained and tried in obedience by a slight and arbitrary test, and the position which we may now occupy, as represented by the very Son of the Highest himself ;—and by him as having “learned obedience by the things which he suffered?” In the former case, our position at the best would have been that of a servant reconciled to service ; in the latter, it is that of a son taught, O how willingly, to obey. For the Lord Jesus makes us one with himself in his sonship, as well as in the obedience which, as the Son, he learned through suffering. In fact it is his sonship that makes his “learning obedience through suffering” so much more precious and profitable, than Adam’s success, had he succeeded, would have been. Or rather, it is the combination of these two—the depth to which he descends as suffering for us in obedience to the Father, and the height to which he raises us as one with him in his sonship—that completes his fitness for being our Saviour. It is thus that “being made perfect, he became the author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him.” For that is the practical issue.

1. He is “made perfect.” In several different

ways, the Lord's sufferings may be regarded as constituting, or contributing to constitute, his perfection or completeness. For one thing, they fit him for having compassion on his people and sympathising with them. In all their trials, they may remember that he was really tempted like as they are,—that he did not insist or presume upon his power and prerogative as the Son, but was simply, like them, a servant and a sufferer in the hands of his Father. And they may be assured that whatever support the unbroken sense of his sonship afforded to him, is afforded also to them ; inasmuch as they also, in and with him, are sons. But the perfection reached through suffering has reference chiefly to the Lord's official character and ministry as the great "high-priest of our profession,"—the representative of his people. In that character, he occupies the place of the first Adam in Paradise ; and on behalf of those for whom he stands, he has to reach that platform of confirmed acceptance to which Adam would have been raised, when his temporary probation was over, had he "learned obedience" by the thing wherein he was tried. This was in large measure "the joy that was set before the author and finisher of our faith," for which "he endured the cross, despising the shame." And his joy was perfected, when "God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

2. Being thus "made perfect," he becomes "the

author of eternal salvation.” For now he is in a condition to bestow upon men, not a contingent or conditional, but a complete salvation ; not the temporary enjoyment of an opportunity of salvation, or another chance, as it were, for trying, upon easier terms than before, to win for themselves eternal life ; but eternal life itself. He is complete for us, and we are complete in him.

3. For all this he requires nothing more on our part than what is reasonable, when he requires the same mind that was in himself ;—he is the author of eternal salvation to “all them that obey him.” For this obedience on our part is really nothing else than sympathy with Jesus in his obedience ; and, in that view, it is twofold. Our first obedience to the Son is to receive the fruit of his obedience. Our next is to submit to him,—as in what he obediently suffered for us,—so in what he calls us obediently to suffer with him. Let us bear his reproach ; take his yoke upon us ; take up his cross. And let us do all this in the spirit of simple obedience : not as being profitable to him, or doing any great thing ; but simply as, in and with him, “learning obedience through suffering.” For indeed it is a great thing to be thus going about every duty, enduring every sorrow, submitting to every privation, simply as like-minded with him,—obedient to him as he was obedient to the Father. Truly, thus suffering with him, we may expect to be also glorified together.

## V.

### THE SON'S STANDING IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”—  
JOHN viii. 34-36.

THIS word of the Lord points to something more than the mere rectifying of an old relation—that of a servant in the house, who has become, by committing sin, the servant of sin. For it is of himself that he speaks when he says, “The Son abideth ever.” Can it be anything short of union and communion with himself in his sonship that he promises when he adds, “If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed?”

He is speaking to “those Jews which believed on him.” He addresses them as persons having a certain religious standing—a place in the house of God. He promises them something better, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” “We be Abraham’s seed” is their proud reply, and as such, we are the servants of the God of Abra-

ham alone ;—"we were never in bondage to any." Not so, is the Lord's rejoinder. A foreign power has interfered with your loyalty to him whose subjects and servants, as Abraham's seed, you professedly are, and are accounted to be. And it is a power with which you cannot cope, unless your position in the house is altered for the better. Your boast of freedom is vain, so long as you are captivated and enslaved by that foreign power,—which is sin ;—"for whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." To be free in the house, you must be in a position not to commit sin. But there is only one position in which you can be thus free. It is the position you have "if the Son shall make you free." For the Son makes you "free indeed." He changes your standing in the house from what it naturally is, into what he alone can give ; his own standing, which he shares with you.\*

\* It may be objected that this interpretation ascribes a double meaning to the word "servant ;" making it descriptive in the one verse of the moral bondage under which the sinner lies to sin, and in the other, of the legal relation in which he stands to God. To a certain extent I admit the relevancy of the objection. But, in the first place, I contend that the term "servant" fairly admits of either application. Then, secondly, I think it remarkable that the Lord should have varied the phraseology. Why does he not say, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, and the servant of sin abideth not in the house for ever?" or simply, without the repetition, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, and abideth not in the house for ever?" Above all, thirdly, I found an argument on the antithesis of servant and son. Why is it not put thus : "He who, committing sin, is the servant of sin, abideth not in the house



I. There can be no freedom in the Father's house for any who commit sin ; for "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." He may be one of "Abraham's seed ;" and as such he may claim a free footing in the house, and do his best to make good his claim. But it is in vain. Do what he may, his position in the house is not free and loving, but painfully servile.

The misery of such a position can be felt only by one who is in earnest. And he must be in earnest about the footing on which he is to be with God. The yoke of sin may sit light on him while he is careless about his place in the Father's house. Let there be an awakening, however, to a better mind. Let him

for ever ; but he who does not commit sin, and is not the servant of sin, abideth ever ? " Why bring in the idea of sonship at all ? Speaking of the servant of sin, the Lord assumes that one who is so cannot be free in the house of God, and cannot have an absolutely secure footing there. And he very plainly teaches that the only thorough remedy for this state of things is participation in the freedom which he himself has, as "the Son abiding ever." See Alford *in loco*.

The following extract from Thomas Hall's sermon on the Perseverance of the Saints, preached at the Lime Street Lecture, 1730-31, confirms the view I take. Speaking of their "*relation* to God," as one of "the two things belonging to their state which shall never fail ;" the other being "the *vital principle* of grace in them ;" he says among other things :—"The peculiar relation they stand in to God is that of children to a father ; and such are the glories of this relation, that it is founded upon the new covenant, and the mediator's perfect atonement. From thence results the security of their standing in this grace, as well as their first accession to it." He holds that God "takes his people into a new and peculiar relation

cease to rely on the mere name and notion of his being Abraham's seed, and be brought seriously to consider what, as Abraham's seed, he ought to be. Then he comes to have a new apprehension altogether of the power of sin. For one thing, he has a new conception of what it is to "commit sin." Formerly, he did not think that he committed sin unless he deliberately performed an ungodly action. Now he feels that the mere consent of the will to an ungodly inclination is the committing of sin. As often as I lust I sin (Rom. vii. 7). And the sin lies mainly in the state of my heart towards God; the estrangement of my affections from him and their entanglement with other objects. The general prevalence of evil in me, and my general aversion to good, is what troubles me. But that trouble is pointed enough to sting me to the

to himself," and that consequently "their adoption shall be uninterrupted and eternal." And then, with reference to God's manner of dealing with them when they offend, he adds: "God may chastise and correct his children; his compassion and love will engage him to do so; but he will never discard or cast them out of his family. The passage we meet with in our Saviour's conference with the Jews, if taken as a standing maxim, is a sufficient proof of this *The Son abideth ever*. The antithesis in the verse directs us in the explication, and shows that the words are applicable to the case before us, as well as to the purpose for which our Lord produced them (John viii. 35). 'The servant abideth not in the house for ever;' no: upon one great offence or for repeated misdemeanours, he is dismissed, turned out of doors, and the relation dissolved"—dissolved, that is, so far as it is a relation implying a right standing in the house—"but there is one sort of treatment for servants and another for children."

quick. I have some sense of what God is entitled to ask from me, and some desire to render to him what he is entitled to ask. I acknowledge the reasonableness of his demand when he requires of me that I should give him my heart. But, alas ! when I would give him my heart, I discover that it is not mine to give. For I commit sin ; and “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”

But why not cease to commit sin? It is more easily said than done. I resolve not to commit sin ; and I do so out of a desire to make good my standing in the house. Honestly and earnestly “I would do good.” But “evil is present with me” (Rom. vii. 21). It is in me, whether I act it out or not ;—the evil of my natural distaste for God’s service and my natural taste for sin’s service, or the world’s. And it masters me. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” There is no freedom here ; no abiding in the house.

II. But whose fault is this ? Mine assuredly, mine only ; for it is I who “commit sin.” I am responsible ; and God forbid that I should seek to shelter myself from blame under the plea that I have been overcome. If I am overcome, it is with my own consent. And yet Paul says, with reference to this very struggle ;—“Not I, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. vii. 17-23). He does therefore complain of his position as one in which he is the victim of sin. Of course, he does not do this in the common

and vulgar way of excusing himself and blaming God. On the contrary, he bitterly bewails his impotency. And he bewails it all the more because it seems to be irremediable ;—irremediable at least so long as he continues in the place which he naturally occupies in the house.

For what is that place ? It is the place of one simply under law. It is of his awakening to a realisation of his being under law that Paul speaks (Rom. vii.) As a subject in the kingdom of God ; as a servant in the family of God ; he owns the authority of his law. He admits its reasonableness ; he feels its excellency. He approves of it, and consents to it. It is the law of the house ; and he would have it to be so. It may be, as it is now brought home to him, fatal to his peace and his life. But, even for the sake of peace and life, he would not have it modified to meet his case. It is right that he should be tried by it ; judged by it ; condemned by it. He feels and owns it to be so.

Have I been made to see what it is to be thus under law to God ?—what is the law under which I am ?—and what is implied in my being under it ? I am under it, as made by God and governed by God. I am under it as not only the manifestation of his nature, but the authoritative declaration of his will. I am bound by it in the strictest forensic sense, as a subject is bound by the law of his sovereign and a servant by the law of his master. It is the covenant

or condition of my life. If I keep it, I am safe ; if I break it, I die. Has all this been made thoroughly palpable to me by the Spirit, so that I recognise both the reality of the arrangement and the rightness of it? What does God claim? My supreme love ;—that I shall love him with all my heart, and not love but hate what is unlovely in his eyes. And how does he assert this claim? By law. It is his legal demand upon me ; and I own it to be just. But there is something in that manner of making this demand which provokes a sort of spirit of contradiction in me. The demand I feel to be perfectly fair, and I honestly desire to respond to it. But, alas! when it is brought home to me by the Spirit in this merely legal form,—however my judgment, my conscience, and even my heart may go along with it,—there is a perverse resistance called forth within me which I never could have anticipated. Holy and pure requirements, enforced as orders, stimulate contrary tendencies. In vain I reason with myself, and blame and reprove and punish myself. That evil nature in me waxes stronger the more I try, under the coercion of law and by force of will, to grapple with it. I am still the servant of sin. I make the sad discovery, which the apostle sadly announced: “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. vii. 14).

Thus, “the law is weak through the flesh” (Rom. viii. 3); weak in its legal form, through that impa-



tience of subjection to legal authority which characterises “the carnal mind,” and proves it to be “enmity against God” (Rom. viii. 7). Thus unpropitious for the struggle against evil,—and the attainment of a state of mind in which I shall not “commit sin” and consequently shall “be free,”—is the position of a mere servant under authority;—the only position that the law can recognise.

III. The reason is to be found very much in the precariousness of the position;—“The servant abideth not in the house for ever.” He has no sure, and therefore no satisfactory place in the family. For it is difficult for one so situated to identify himself with the family, or with him who rules it, or with the law by which he rules it. The idea of separate interests is apt to insinuate itself into the mind, and to beget there suspicion of ill-treatment and a perverse dislike of being controlled. Even if these feelings do not issue in actual disobedience, they are in themselves sinful. Sin is already committed the moment they find harbour in the breast, and consequently liberty is compromised. And they are apt to return every time the precariousness of the position of a servant, and the risk of forfeiting it, are remembered and felt.

I doubt if any beings endowed with the faculty of intelligence and the power of spontaneous choice could permanently occupy such a position with reference to God, or could feel themselves to be free

in occupying it. It was the position of the elect angels, as well as of their companions, before these last miserably fell. I cannot imagine it to be their position now. It was the position of our first parents ; they were servants upon trial. If they had stood the trial, it would not probably have been their position long. As it was, they began to feel themselves fettered—to grow impatient of restraint—to doubt the love, the wisdom, the truth and justice of the Being whom they served. They were under law to him ; and their being so became the tempter's instrument for putting the thought of transgression into their hearts. They were weary of suspense. They sinned, and became the servants of sin.

Now, if a position thus precarious is so full of hazard even to sinless and unfallen intelligences,—and indeed so apt to be fatal,—what must it be to us ? Surely it is good news to hear these gracious words, which are the charter of our freedom :—“The Son abideth ever ;—if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

IV. The position of the Son himself, “The Son abideth ever ;”—his manner of dealing with us, “If the Son shall make you free ;”—and the practical result, “Then are ye free indeed ;”—these are the three points now to be considered.

1. “The Son abideth ever.” The Lord does not say this with reference to his eternal Godhead ; he

says it as our Redeemer, who for our redemption has become incarnate ; taking our nature and our place under the law as a subject and servant. And what then ? Does the element which enfeebles that position of service to us enter into the cup which he has to drink ? Not so. For though a servant, he is still the Son ; and “the Son abideth ever.” He does indeed come into a state from which, as it is in itself, the idea of possible failure is inseparable ; whose obligations, if unfulfilled, involve the forfeiture of life ; whose responsibilities and liabilities, if not met, carry in them the certain doom of everlasting death. But he who comes into that position is the Son ; and he retains in it all along the character and standing of the Son. Hence the position of a servant, even of a servant upon trial, however in itself precarious, is not precarious to him. And now, his appointed work and warfare as a servant being over, “the Son abideth ever.” He is himself emphatically free now ; for he is past the stage of trial, being made “perfect, as the captain of salvation, through his sufferings” (Heb. ii. 10). If he makes us free with his own freedom, we are free indeed.

2. And he does. He makes us partakers with himself in the position which he now occupies in the house ; the position of a justified servant and an acknowledged son, in which there is service crowned and sonship gloriously declared.

Here, strange to say, the difficulty is on our side ; it

is the difficulty of procuring our consent. For he cannot dispense with that. If we insist on continuing to be servants merely, painfully trying to work out some legal title to abide in the house, even the Son cannot make us free. But he would not have us to continue in that mind; he does all that can be done to get us out of it. On the one hand, he asks of us what should be a very simple thing,—and he asks it almost as if it were a personal favour to himself,—to let him take our service as his own and to take for ourselves his sonship. What more reasonable, what more gracious than that? What could he do more? And yet more he does, not indeed in the way of persuading us, but in the way of causing us to be accessible to persuasion. To whom does he “give power to become the sons of God?” “To as many as receive him;” to them that “believe on his name.” And who are they? They are such as “are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John i. 12, 13). Blood will not do; we may be Abraham’s seed; and yet, committing sin, we are the servants of sin. The will of the flesh will not do; nor the will of man. No declaration of the church’s mind, no self-originated movement of our own mind, will turn us who are servants into sons. We must be “born of God.”

It is a great change in our relation to God to which we are thus asked to give our consent. We have gone far astray from him; wandering into a far country.

There we begin to be in want ;—in distress of conscience. And we can find no relief among the citizens of that land which we have preferred to the Father's home. We must return to him, and come to terms with him. But how ? Is it with a proposal to be "as one of his hired servants" that I am to return to him ? There is apparent humility in that ; but it is only apparent. To work for what I want is less mortifying to my self-esteem than to be simply a debtor to free grace, a receiver of gratuitous bounty. Ah ! there is a great change when I am made willing to let the Son, who became a servant for me, and as a servant did my work and bore my punishment, take me by the hand and lead me home to his Father and my Father ;—when, thus led home by the Elder Brother, I get an insight into that Father's heart, as he sees me afar off, and runs to meet me. I cannot now have it in my heart to say, as I had intended to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." I suffer that loving Father to fall upon my neck and kiss me, and simply pour out the confession of filial shame and sorrow ; "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ;"—no more worthy, but willing ;—made willing, Father, by "thine own self" in the day of thy power.

3. Thus, the Son makes us "free indeed ;" free as he is himself free. Plainly, this freedom implies these two things—the discharge of all debts or obligations lying on us previously as servants ; and our admission



to a participation in the sonship of him who, as the Son, abideth ever in the house. Doubly we are thus made free. On the one hand, as servants we are discharged from guilt and liability to punishment. And we are not discharged in mere contemptuous pity or in false compassion, as if we were so vile that it was not worth while to reckon with us. There is a reckoning; a strict dealing with us, as represented by our substitute; with him for us,—with us in him. It is that consideration, and that alone, which satisfies the really awakened conscience. Then, on the other hand, we are not only free, as servants, from condemnation; we are free, as sons; free to be partakers with Christ the Son in all the love and all the glory which are his, by the Father's will, from everlasting (John xvii. 22-26).

Of all this wonderful dealing with us, what is the issue?

(1.) "Sin shall no more have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace." I am now in the house on such a footing as gives me an advantage over the sin which once had an advantage over me. It can no more come with the insidious question,—“Yea, hath God said ye shall not?” When it would sow again the seeds of dissatisfaction in my mind towards my God, as if he were a hard master, it hears me saying in the bottom of my heart, My Father! And that word breaks its spell. I can listen now to no insinuations reflecting on my Father's

love, or throwing doubt on the truth of my Father's sayings and the rectitude of all my Father's dealings. I can welcome now no proposals pointing in the direction of freedom from him. I have freedom with him, and that is better far.

The strength of "sin is the law;" "it takes occasion by the commandment." But grace cuts off the occasion. It outwits, as it were, sin. When sin comes to seek me where it used to find me—working hard as a servant upon probation, for my very life, under the pressure of a heavy load of legal liabilities—lo! I am not there at all;—another is there to answer for me,—the chosen servant of the Most High. And I am elsewhere; at home with him, as the Son, in the bosom of our common Father. I am as he is;—as he is now that he has stood the test. And well does the tempter know that, though he might hope to prevail even over the Son, when he found him in the wilderness entering on his work,—or when he found him in Gethsemane in the agony of it,—he has no way of assailing him now, since his work as the servant is graciously accepted, and his standing as the Son is gloriously ratified.

(2.) Hence, "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," and therefore is not liable to become "the servant of sin." "He cannot sin because he is born of God." "The seed of God abideth in him;" the seed, the germ, the principle of a divine life, with which the commission of sin is incompatible (1 John

iii. 9). For if the Son makes us free, not only do we enter into a new position, we receive a new nature; the Spirit in us crying "Abba, Father." Now we cannot be crying "Abba, Father," and at the very same moment committing sin. We may call God Master, Lawgiver, Judge, and at the same time sin. But we cannot from the heart call him Father, and be sinning.

Let us ask ourselves what has been our frame of mind when in any one recent instance we have been committing sin—what has been the state of our heart towards God? Has it been filial, or servile? Was it "Abba, Father," that we were crying? Nay, were we not letting in again the old jealousies that used to haunt us when we were merely servants under the law;—counting God's "commandments"—or some of them—"grievous?" Let us be very sure that it is our being in a position and having the heart to cry "Abba, Father," that alone will reconcile us to God's service as being perfect freedom, and so keep us from committing sin.

(3.) Therefore, let us assert always and act out our filial freedom in the house; let us make full proof of it. Let us imagine to ourselves a sort of sequel to the parable of the prodigal son. How new and strange are all things in his Father's house to him now, familiar as he may have been with many of them before! Formerly he was in the house; a son in name, but a servant in spirit. His was a ser-

vile mind—full of servile suspicions and resentments, and a servile longing for the liberty of independence. Then he saw all things in and about the house in a false light. But it is quite otherwise now. He is on a new footing in the house ; he has a new heart toward the master of the house ; he has a new eye for all that the house contains. What fresh discoveries is he every day making in it of his Father's transcendent excellency ! What new beauties, what new glories,—in its furniture within and its scenery without,—burst at every moment on his view ! What new blessedness is he ever tasting in its fellowship : what new liberty and joy in all its works and services ! How could he ever conceive of abiding in this house being irksome, or living with this Father dull, or obeying this Father a drudgery ! How could he ever dream of asking to get away ! And how must he pity the children who are still outcasts as he once was ! How must he long to go forth with that Elder Brother who sought him out and brought him home, on all his errands of love ; to gather in one and another, nay, a multitude of sons and daughters, now vile and wretched, such as he was but yesterday !—Oh that they may become such as I am to-day !—Nay rather, such as He is who makes me free indeed !

THE END.

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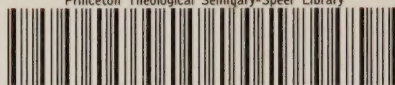








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